

LEVER CHARLES JAMES

DAVENPORT DUNN, A
MAN OF OUR DAY.
VOLUME 2

Charles Lever

**Davenport Dunn, a Man
of Our Day. Volume 2**

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Содержание

CHAPTER I. THE TELEGRAPHIC DESPATCH	5
CHAPTER II. "THE RUN FOR GOLD"	9
CHAPTER III. A NOTE FROM DAVIS	17
CHAPTER IV. LAZARUS, STEIN, GELDWECHSLER	22
CHAPTER V. A VILLAGE NEAR THE RHINE	29
CHAPTER VI. IMMINENT TIDINGS	36
CHAPTER VII. A DISCURSIVE CONVERSATION	41
CHAPTER VIII. A FAMILY MEETING	45
CHAPTER IX. A SAUNTER BY MOONLIGHT	50
CHAPTER X. A RIDE TO NEUWIED	58
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	59

Charles James Lever

Davenport Dunn, a Man of Our Day. Volume 2 (of 2)

CHAPTER I. THE TELEGRAPHIC DESPATCH

When Mr. Davenport Dunn entered the drawing-room before dinner on that day, his heart beat very quickly as he saw Lady Augusta Arden was there alone. In what spirit she remembered the scene of the morning, – whether she felt resentment towards him for his presumption, was disposed to scoff down his pretensions, or to regard them, if not with favor, with at least forgiveness, were the themes on which his mind was yet dwelling. The affable smile with which she now met him did more to resolve these doubts than all his casuistry.

“Was it not very thoughtful of me,” said she, “to release you this morning, and suffer you to address yourself to the important things which claimed your attention? I really am quite vain of my self-denial.”

“And yet, Lady Augusta,” said he, in a low tone, “I had felt more flattered if you had been less mindful of the exigency, and been more interested in what I then was speaking of.”

“What a selfish speech!” said she, laughing. “Now that my forbearance has given you all the benefits it could confer, you turn round and say you are not grateful for it. I suppose,” added she, half pettishly, “the despatch was not very pressing after all, and that this was the cause of some disappointment.”

“I am unable to say,” replied he, calmly.

“What do you mean? Surely, when you read it – ”

“But I have not read it, – there it is still, just as you saw-it,” said he, producing the packet with the seal unbroken.

“But really, Mr. Dunn,” said she, and her face flushed up as she spoke, “this does not impress me with the wonderful aptitude for affairs men ascribe to you. Is it usual to treat these messages so cavalierly?”

“It never happened with me till this morning, Lady Augusta,” said he, in the same low tone. “Carried away by an impulse which I will not try to account for, I had dared to speak to you of myself and of my future in a way that showed how eventful to both might prove the manner in which you heard me.”

“Well, Dunn,” cried Lord Glengariff, entering, “I suppose you have made a day of work of it; we have never seen you since breakfast.”

“On the contrary, my Lord,” replied he, in deep confusion, “I have taken my idleness in the widest sense. Never wrote a line, – not looked into a newspaper.”

“Wouldn’t even open a telegraphic message which came to his hands this morning,” said Lady Augusta, with a malicious drollery in her glance towards him.

“Incredible!” cried my Lord.

“Quite true, I assure your Lordship,” said Dunn, in deeper confusion, and not knowing what turn to give his explanation.

“The fact is,” broke in Lady Augusta, hurriedly, “Mr. Dunn was so implicit in his obedience to our prescription of perfect rest and repose, that he made it a point of honor not even to read a telegram without permission.”

“I must say it is very flattering to us,” said Lord Glengariff; “but now let us reward the loyalty, and let him see what his news is.”

Dunn looked at Lady Augusta, who, with the very slightest motion of her head, gave consent, and he broke open the despatch.

Dunn crushed the paper angrily in his hand when he finished reading it, and muttered some low words of angry meaning.

“Nothing disagreeable, I trust?” asked his Lordship.

“Yes, my Lord, something even worse than disagreeable,” said he; then flattening out the crumpled paper, he held it to him to read.

Lord Glengariff, putting on his spectacles, perused the document slowly, and then, turning towards Dunn, in a voice of deep agitation, said, “This is very disastrous indeed; are you prepared for it?”

Without attending to the question, Dunn took the despatch from Lord Glengariff, and handed it to Lady Augusta.

“A run for gold!” cried she, suddenly. “An attempt to break the Ossory Bank! What does it all mean? Who are they that make this attack?”

“Opponents – some of them political, some commercial, a few, perhaps, men personally unfriendly, – enemies of what they call my success!” and he sighed heavily on the last word. “Let me see,” said he, slowly, after a pause; “to-day is Thursday – to-morrow will be the 28th – heavy payments are required for the Guatemala Trunk Line, – something more than forty thousand pounds to be made up. The Parma Loan, second instalment, comes on the 80th.”

“Dinner, my Lord,” said a servant, throwing open the door.

“A thousand pardons, Lady Augusta,” said Dunn, offering his arm. “I am really shocked at obtruding these annoyances upon your notice. You see, my Lord,” added he, gayly, “one of the penalties of admitting the ‘working-men of life’ into your society.”

It was only as they passed on towards the dinner-room that Lord Glengariff noticed Miss Kellett’s absence.

“She has a headache or a cold, I believe,” said Lady Augusta, carelessly; and they sat down to dinner.

So long as the servants were present the conversation ranged over commonplace events and topics, little indeed passing, since each seemed too deeply impressed with grave forebodings for much inclination for mere talking. Once alone – and Lord Glengariff took the earliest moment to be so – they immediately resumed the subject of the ill-omened despatch.

“You are, at all events, prepared, Dunn?” said the Earl; “this onslaught does not take you by surprise?”

“I am ashamed to say it does, my Lord,” said he, with a painful smile. “I was never less suspicious of any malicious design upon me. I was, for the first time perhaps in all my life, beginning to feel strong in the consciousness that I had faithfully performed my allotted part in the world, advanced the great interests of my country and of humanity generally. This blow has, therefore, shocked me deeply.”

“What a base ingratitude!” exclaimed Lady Augusta, indignantly.

“After all,” said Dunn, generously, “let us remember that I am not a fair judge in my own cause. Others have taken, it may be, another reading of my character; they may deem me narrow-minded, selfish, and ambitious. My very success – I am not going to deny it has been great – may have provoked its share of enmity. Why, the very vastness and extent of my projects were a sort of standing reproach to petty speculators and small scheme-mongers.”

“So that it has really come upon you unawares?” said the Earl, reverting to his former remark.

“Completely so, my Lord. The tranquil ease and happiness I have enjoyed under this roof – the first real holiday in a long life of toil – are the best evidences I can offer how little I could have anticipated such a stroke.”

“Still I fervently hope it will not prove more than inconvenience,” said he, feelingly.

“Not even so much, my Lord, as regards money. I cannot believe that the movement will be general. There is no panic in the country, rents are paid, prices remunerating, markets better than we have seen them for years; the sound sense and intelligence of the people will soon detect in this attack the prompting of some personal malice. In all likelihood a few thousands will meet the whole demand.”

“I am so glad to hear you say so!” said Lady Augusta, smiling. “Really, when I think of all our persuasions to detain you here, I never could acquit us of some sort of share in any disaster your delay might have occasioned.”

“Oh, Dunn would never connect his visit here with such consequences, I ‘m certain,” said the Earl.

“Assuredly not, my Lord,” said he; and as his eyes met those of Lady Augusta, he grew red, and felt confused.

“Are your people – your agents and men of business, I mean,” said the Earl – “equal to such an emergency as the present, or will they have to look to *you* for guidance and direction?”

“Merely to meet the demand for gold is a simple matter, my Lord,” said Dunn, “and does not require any effort of mind or forethought. To prevent the back-water of this rushing flood submerging and engulfing other banking-houses; to defend, in a word, the lines of our rivals and enemies; to save from the consequences of their recklessness the very men who have assailed us, – these are weighty cares!”

“And are you bound in honor to take this trouble in their behalf?”

“No, my Lord, not in honor any more than in law, but bound by the debt we owe to that commercial community by whose confidence we have acquired fortune. My position at the head of the great industrial movement in this country imposes upon me the great responsibility that ‘no injury should befall the republic’ Against the insane attacks of party hate, factious violence, or commercial knavery, I am expected to do my duty, nay, more, I am expected to be provided with means to meet whatever emergency may arise, – defeat this scheme, expose that, denounce the other. Am I wrong in calling these weighty cares?”

Self-glorification was not usually one of Davenport Dunn’s weaknesses, – indeed, “self,” in any respect, was not a theme on which he was disposed to dwell, – and yet now, for reasons which may better be suspected than alleged, he talked in a spirit of even vain exultation of his plans, his station, and his influence. If it was something to display before the peer claims to national respect, which, if not so ancient, were scarcely less imposing than his own, it was more pleasing still to dilate upon a theme to which the peer’s daughter listened so eagerly. It was, besides, a grand occasion to exhibit the vast range of resources, the widespread influences, and far-reaching sympathies of the great commercial man, to show him, not the mere architect of his own fortune, but the founder of a nation’s prosperity. While he thus held forth, and in a strain to which fervor had lent a sort of eloquence, a servant entered with another despatch.

“Oh! I trust this brings you better news,” cried Lady Augusta, eagerly; and, as he broke the envelope, he thanked her with a grateful look.

“Well?” interposed she, anxiously, as he gazed at the lines without speaking, – “well?”

“Just as I said,” muttered Dunn, in a deep and suppressed voice, – “a systematic plot, a deep-laid scheme against me.”

“Is it still about the Bank?” asked the Earl, whose interest had been excited by the tenor of the recent conversation.

“Yes, my Lord; they insist on making me out a bubble speculator, an adventurer, a Heaven knows what of duplicity and intrigue. I would simply ask them: ‘Is the wealth with which this same Davenport Dunn has enriched you real, solid, and tangible; are the guineas mint-stamped; are the shares true representatives of value?’ But why do I talk of these people? If they render me no gratitude, they owe me none, – my aims were higher and greater than ever *they* or *their* interests comprehended.”

From the haughty defiance of his tone, his voice fell suddenly to a low and quick key, as he said: “This message informs me that the demand upon the Ossory to-morrow will be a great concerted movement. Barnard, the man I myself returned last election for the borough, is to head it; he has canvassed the county for holders of our notes, and such is the panic that the magistrates have sent for an increased force of police and two additional companies of infantry. My man of business asks, ‘What is to be done?’”

“And what *is* to be done?” asked the Earl.

“Meet it, my Lord. Meet the demand as our duty requires us.”

There was a calm dignity in the manner Dunn spoke the words that had its full effect upon the Earl and his daughter. They saw this “man of the people” display, in a moment of immense peril, an amount of cool courage that no dissimulation could have assumed. As they could, and did indeed say afterwards, when relating the incident, “We were sitting at the dessert, chatting away freely about one thing or another, when the confirmed tidings arrived by telegraph that an organized attack was to be made against his credit by a run for gold. You should really have seen him,” said Lady Augusta, “to form any idea of the splendid composure he manifested. The only thing like emotion he exhibited was a sort of haughty disdain, a proud pity, for men who should have thus required the great services he had been rendering to the country.”

It is but just to own that he did perform his part well; he acted it, too, as theatrical critics would say, “chastely;” that is, there was no rant, no exaggeration, – not a trait too much, not a tint too strong.

“I wish I knew of any way to be of service to you in this emergency, Dunn,” said the Earl, as they returned to the drawing-room; “I’m no capitalist, nor have I a round sum at my command – ”

“My dear Lord,” broke in Dunn, with much feeling, “of money I can command whatever amount I want. Baring, Hope, Rothschild, any of them would assist me with millions, if I needed them, to-morrow, which happily, however, I do not. There is still a want which they cannot supply, but which, I am proud to say, I have no longer to fear. The kind sympathy of your Lordship and Lady Augusta has laid me under an obligation – ” Here Mr. Dunn’s voice faltered; the Earl grasped his hand with a generous clasp, and Lady Augusta carried her handkerchief to her eyes as she averted her head.

“What a pack of hypocrites!” cries our reader, in disgust. No, not so. There was a dash of reality through all this deceit. They *were* moved, – their own emotions, the tones of their own voices, the workings of their own natures, *had* stirred some amount of honest sentiment in their hearts; how far it was alloyed by less worthy feeling, to what extent fraud and trickery mingled there, we are not going to tell you, – perhaps we could not, if we would.

“You mean to go over to Kilkenny, then, to-morrow, Dunn?” asked his Lordship, after a painful pause.

“Yes, my Lord, my presence is indispensable.”

“Will you allow Lady Augusta and myself to accompany you? I believe and trust that men like myself have not altogether lost the influence they once used to wield in this country, and I am vain enough to imagine I may be useful.”

“Oh, my Lord, this overwhelms me!” said Dunn, and covered his eyes with his hand.

CHAPTER II. “THE RUN FOR GOLD”

The great Ossory Bank, with its million sterling of paid-up capital, its royal charter, its titled directory, and its shares at a premium, stood at the top of Patrick Street, Kilkenny, and looked, in the splendor of its plate-glass windows and the security of its iron railings, the very type of solvency and safety. The country squire ascended the hall-door steps with a sort of feeling of acquaintanceship, for he had known the Viscount who once lived there in days before the Union, and the farmer experienced a sense of trustfulness in depositing his hard-earned gains in what he regarded as a temple of Croesus. What an air of prosperity and business did the interior present! The massive doors swung noiselessly at the slightest touch, meet emblem of the secrecy that prevailed, and the facility that pervaded all transactions, within. What alacrity, too, in that numerous band of clerks who counted and cashed and checked unceasingly! How calmly they passed from desk to desk, a word, a mere whisper, serving for converse; and then what a grand and mysterious solemnity about that back office with its double doors, within which some venerable cashier, bald-headed and pursy, stole at intervals to consult the oracle who dwelt within! In the spacious apartment devoted to cash operations, nothing denoted the former destiny of the mansion but a large fireplace, with a pretentious chimney-piece of black oak, over which a bust of our gracious Queen now figured, an object of wonderment and veneration to many a frieze-coated gazer.

On the morning of the 12th August, to which day we have brought our present history, the street in front of the Bank presented a scene of no ordinary interest. From an early hour people continued to pour in, till the entire way was choked up with carriages and conveyances of every description, from the well-equipped barouche of the country gentleman to the humblest “shandradan” of the petty farmer. Sporting-looking fellows upon high-conditioned thoroughbreds, ruddy old squires upon cobs, and hard-featured country-folk upon shaggy ponies, were all jammed up together amidst a dense crowd of foot passengers. A strong police-force was drawn up in front of the Bank, although nothing in the appearance of the assembled mass seemed to denote the necessity for their presence. A low murmur of voices ran through the crowd as each talked to his neighbor, consulting, guessing, and speculating, as temperament inclined: some were showing placards and printed notices they had received through the post; some pointed to newspaper paragraphs; others displayed great rolls of notes; but all talked with a certain air of sadness that appeared to presage coming misfortune. As ten o'clock drew nigh, the hour for opening the Bank, the excitement rose to a painful pitch; every eye was directed to the massive door, whose gorgeous brass knocker shone with a sort of insolent brilliancy in the sun. At every moment watches were consulted, and in muttered whispers men broke their fears to those beside them. Some could descry the heads of people moving about in the cash-office, where a considerable bustle appeared to prevail; and even this much of life seemed to raise the spirits of the crowd, and the rumor ran quickly on every side that the Bank was about to open. At last the deep bell of the town-hall struck ten. At each fall of the hammer all expected to see the door move, but it never stirred; and now the pent-up feeling of the multitude might be marked in a sort of subdued growl, – a low, ill-boding sound, that seemed to come out of the very earth. As if to answer the unspoken anger of the crowd, – a challenge accepted ere given, – a heavy crash was heard, and the police proceeded to load with ball in the face of the people, – a demonstration whose significance there was no mistaking. A cry of angry defiance burst from the assembled mass at the sight, but as suddenly was checked again as the massive door was seen to move, and then, with a loud bang, fly wide open. The rush was now tremendous. With some vague impression that everything depended upon being amongst the first, the people poured in with all the force of a mighty torrent. Each, fighting his way as if for life itself, regardless of the cries of suffering about him, strove to get forward; nor could all the efforts of the police avail to restrain them in the slightest. Bleeding, wounded, half suffocated, with bruised faces and clothes torn to tatters, they struggled on, – no deference to age, no respect to condition. It

was a fearful anarchy, where every thought of the past was lost in the present emergency. On they poured, breathless and bloody, with gleaming eyes and faces of demoniacal meaning; they pushed, they jostled, and they tore, till the first line gained the counter, against which the force behind now threatened to crush them to death.

What a marvellous contrast to the storm-tossed multitude, steaming and disfigured, was the calm attitude of the clerks within the counter! Not deigning, as it seemed, to bestow a glance upon the agitated scene before them, they moved placidly about, pen behind the ear, in voices of ordinary tone, asking what each wanted, and counting over the proffered notes with all the impassiveness of every-day habit. "Gold for these, did you say?" they repeated, as though any other demand met the ear! Why, the very air rang with the sound, and the walls gave back the cry. From the wild voice of half-maddened recklessness to the murmur that broke from fainting exhaustion, there was but one word, – "Gold!" A drowning crew, as the surging waves swept over them, never screamed for succor with wilder eagerness than did that tangled mass shout, "Gold, gold!"

In their savage energy they could scarcely credit that their demands should be so easily complied with; they were half stupefied at the calm indifference that met their passionate appeal. They counted and recounted the glittering pieces over and over, as though some trick were to be apprehended, some deception to be detected. When drawn or pulled back from the counter by others eager as themselves, they might be seen in corners, counting over their money, and reckoning it once more. It was so hard to believe that all their terrors were for nothing, their worst fears without a pretext. Even yet they couldn't imagine but that the supply must soon run short, and they kept asking those that came away whether they, too, had got their gold. Hour after hour rolled on, and still the same demand, and still the same unbroken flow of the yellow tide continued. Some very large checks had been presented; but no sooner was their authenticity acknowledged than they were paid. An agent from another bank arrived with a formidable roll of "Ossory" notes, but was soon seen issuing forthwith two bursting little bags of sovereigns. Notwithstanding all this, the pressure never ceased for a moment; nay, as the day wore on, the crowds seemed to have grown denser and more importunate; and when the half-exhausted clerks claimed a few minutes' respite for a biscuit and a glass of wine, a cry of impatience burst from the insatiable multitude. It was three o'clock. In another hour the Bank would close, as many surmised, never to open again. It was evident, from the still increasing crowd and the excitement that prevailed, how little confidence the ready payments of the Bank had diffused. They who came forth loaded with gold were regarded as fortunate, while they who still waited for their turn were in all the feverish torture of uncertainty.

A little after three the crowd was cleft open by the passage of a large travelling-barouche, which, with four steaming postmen, advanced slowly through the dense mass.

"Who comes here with an earl's coronet?" said a gentleman to his neighbor, as the carriage passed. "Lord Glengariff, and Davenport Dunn himself, by George!" cried he suddenly.

The words were as quickly caught up by those at either side, and the news, "Davenport Dunn has arrived," ran through the immense multitude. If there was an eager, almost intense anxiety to catch a glimpse of him, there was still nothing that could indicate, in the slightest degree, the state of popular feeling towards him. Slightly favorable it might possibly have been, inasmuch as a faint effort at a cheer burst forth at the announcement of his name; but it was repressed just as suddenly, and it was in a silence almost awful that he descended from the carriage at the private door of the Bank.

"Do, I beg of you, Mr. Dunn," said Lady Augusta, as he stood to assist her to alight; "let me entreat of you not to think of us. We can be most comfortably accommodated at the hotel."

"By all means, Dunn. I insist upon it," broke in the Earl.

"In declining my poor hospitality, my Lord," said Dunn, "you will grieve me much, while you will also favor the impression that I am not in a condition to offer it."

"Ah! quite true, – very justly observed. Dunn is perfectly right, Augusta. We ought to stop here." And he descended at once, and gave his hand to his daughter.

Lady Augusta turned about ere she entered the house, and looked at the immense crowd before her. There was something of almost resentfulness in the haughty gaze she bestowed; but, let us own, the look, whatever it implied, well became her proud features; and more than one was heard to say, “What a handsome woman she is!”

This little incident in the day’s proceedings gave rise to much conjecture, some auguring that events must be grave and menacing when Dunn’s own presence was required, others inferring that he came to give assurance and confidence to the Bank. Nor was the appearance of Lord Glen-gariff less open to its share of surmise; and many were the inquiries how far he was personally interested, – whether he was a large stockholder of the concern, or deep in its books as debtor. Leaving the speculative minds who discussed the subject without doors, let us follow Mr. Dunn, as, with Lady Augusta on his arm, he led the way to the drawing-room.

The rooms were handsomely furnished, that to the back opening upon a conservatory filled with rich geraniums, and ornamented with a pretty marble fountain, now in full play. Indeed, so well had Dunn’s orders been attended to, that the apartments which he scarcely occupied for above a day or so in a twelvemonth had actually assumed the appearance of being in constant use. Books, prints, and newspapers were scattered about, fresh flowers stood in the vases, and recent periodicals lay on the tables.

“What a charming house!” exclaimed Lady Augusta; and, really, the approbation was sincere, for the soft-cushioned sofas, the perfumed air, the very quiet itself, were in delightful contrast to the heat and discomfort of a journey by “rail.”

It was in vain Dunn entreated his noble guests to accept some luncheon; they peremptorily refused, and, in fact, declared that they would only remain there on the condition that he bestowed no further thought upon them, addressing himself entirely to the weighty cares around him.

“Will you, at least, tell me at what hour you’d like dinner, my Lord? Shall we say six?”

“With all my heart. Only, once more, I beg, never think of us. We are most comfortable here, and want for nothing.”

With a deep bow of obedience, Dunn moved towards the door, when suddenly Lady Augusta whispered a few rapid words in her father’s ear.

“Stop a moment, Dunn!” cried the Earl. “Augusta is quite right. The observation is genuine woman’s wit. She says I ought to go down along with you, to show myself in the Bank; that my presence there will have a salutary effect. Eh, what d’ye think?”

“I am deeply indebted to Lady Augusta for the suggestion,” said Dunn, coloring highly. “There cannot be a doubt that your Lordship’s countenance and support at such a moment are priceless.”

“I ‘m glad you think so, glad she thought of it,” muttered the Earl, as he arranged his white locks before the glass, and made a sort of hasty toilet for his approaching appearance in public.

To judge from the sensation produced by the noble Lord’s appearance in the Bank, Lady Augusta’s suggestion was admirable. The arrival of a wagon-load of bullion could scarcely have caused a more favorable impression. If Noah had been an Englishman, the dove would have brought him not an olive-branch but a lord. I say it in no spirit of sarcasm or sneer, for, *coteris paribus*, lords are better company than commoners; I merely record it passingly, as a strong trait of our people and our race. So was it now, that from the landed gentleman to the humblest tenant-farmer, the Earl’s presence seemed a fresh guarantee of solvency. Many remarked that Dunn looked pale, – some thought anxious; but all agreed that the hearty-faced, white-haired old nobleman at his side was a perfect picture of easy self-satisfaction.

They took their seats in the cash-office, within the counter, to be seen by all, and see everything that went forward. If Davenport Dunn regarded the scene with a calm and unmoved indifference, his attention being, in fact, more engrossed by his newspaper than by what went on around, Lord Glengariff’s quick eye and ear were engaged incessantly. He scanned the appearance of each new applicant as he came up to the table; he listened to his demand, noted its amount, and watched with

piercing glance what effect it might produce on the cashier. Nor was he an unmoved spectator of the scene; for while he simply contented himself with an angry stare at the frieze-coated peasant, he actually scowled an insolent defiance when any of higher rank or more pretentious exterior presented himself, muttering in broken accents beneath his breath, "Too bad, too bad!" "Gross ingratitude!" "A perfect disgrace!" and so on.

He was at the very climax of his indignation, when a voice from the crowd addressed him with "How d' ye do, my Lord? I was not aware you were in this part of the country."

He put up his double eyeglass, and speedily recognized the Mr. Barnard whom Dunn mentioned as so unworthily requiting all he had done for him.

"No, sir," said the Earl, haughtily; "and just as little did I expect to see you here on such an errand as this. In *my* day, country gentlemen were the first to give the example of trust and confidence, and not foremost in propagating unworthy apprehensions."

"I'm not a partner in the Bank, my Lord, and know nothing of its solvency," said the other, as he handed in two checks over the counter.

"Eight thousand six hundred and forty-eight. Three thousand, twelve, nine, six," said the clerk, mechanically. "How will you have it, sir?"

"Bank of Ireland notes will do."

Dunn lifted his eyes from the paper, and then, raising his hat, saluted Mr. Barnard.

"I trust you left Mrs. Barnard well?" said he, in a calm voice.

"Yes, thank you – well – quite well," said Barnard, in some confusion.

"Will you remember to tell her that she shall have the acorns of the Italian pines next week? I have heard of their arrival at the Custom-house."

While Barnard muttered a very confused expression of thanks, the old Earl looked from one to the other of the speakers in a sort of bewilderment. Where was the angry indignation he had looked for from Dunn, – where the haughty denunciation of a black ingratitude?

"Why, Dunn, I say," whispered he, "isn't this Barnard the fellow you spoke of, – the man you returned to Parliament t' other day?"

"The same, my Lord," replied Dunn, in a low, cautious voice. "He is here exacting a right, – a just right, – and no more. It is not now, nor in this place, that I would remind him how ungraciously he has treated me. This day is *his*. *Mine* will come yet."

Before Lord Glengariff could well recover from the astonishment of this cold and calculating patience, Mr. Hanks pushed his way through the crowd, with an open letter in his hand.

It was a telegram just received, with an account of an attack made by the mob on Mr. Dunn's house in Dublin. Like all such communications, the tidings were vague and unsatisfactory: "A terrific attack by mob on No. 18. Windows smashed, and front door broken, but not forced. Police repulsed; military sent for."

"So much for popular gratitude, my Lord," said Dunn, as he handed the slip of paper to the Earl. "Fortunately, it was never the prize on which I had set my heart. Mr. Hanks," said he, in a bland, calm voice, "the crowd seems scarcely diminished outside. Will you kindly affix a notice on the door, to state that, to convenience the public, the Bank will on this day continue open till five o'clock?"

"By Heaven! they don't deserve such courtesy!" cried the old Lord, passionately. "Be as just as you please, but show them no generosity. If it be thus they treat the men who devote their best energies, their very lives, to the country, I, for one, say it is not a land to live in, and I spurn them as countrymen!"

"What would you have, my Lord? The best troops have turned and fled under the influence of a panic; the magic words, 'We are mined!' once routed the very column that had stormed a breach! You don't expect to find the undisciplined masses of mankind more calmly courageous than the veterans of a hundred fights."

A wild hoarse cheer burst forth in the street at this moment, and drowned all other sounds.

“What is it now? Are they going to attack us here?” cried the Earl.

The cry again arose, louder and wilder, and the shouts of “Dunn forever! Dunn forever!” burst from a thousand voices.

“The placard has given great satisfaction, sir,” said Hanks, reappearing. “Confidence is fully restored.”

And, truly, it was strange to see how quickly a popular sentiment spread its influence; for they who now came forward to exchange their notes for gold no longer wore the sturdy air of defiance of the earlier applicants, but approached half reluctantly, and with an evident sense of shame, as though yielding to an ignoble impulse of cowardice and fear. The old Earl’s haughty stare and insolent gaze were little calculated to rally the diffident; for with his double eyeglass he scanned each new-comer with the air of a man saying, “I mark, and I ‘ll not forget you!”

What a contrast was Dunn’s expression, – that look so full of gentle pity and forgiveness! Nothing of anger, no resentfulness, disfigured the calm serenity of his pale features. He had a word of recognition – even a smile and a kind inquiry – for some of those who now bashfully tried to screen themselves from notice. The great rush was already over; a visible change had come over that vast multitude who so lately clamored aloud for gold. The very aspect of that calm, unmoved face was a terrible rebuke to their unworthy terror.

“It’s nigh over, sir,” whispered Hanks to his chief, as he stood with his massive gold watch in the hollow of his hand. “Seven hundred only have been paid out in the last twelve minutes. The battle is finished!”

The vociferous cheering without continued unceasingly, and yells for Dunn to come forth and show himself filled the air.

“Do you hear them?” asked Lord Glengariff, looking eagerly at Dunn.

“Yes, my Lord. It is a very quick reaction. Popular opinion is generally correct in the main; but it is rare to find it reversing its own judgments so suddenly.”

“Very dispassionately spoken, sir,” said the old Lord, haughtily; “but what if you had been unprepared for this onslaught to-day, – what if they had succeeded in compelling you to suspend payments?”

“Had such been possible, my Lord, we would have richly deserved any reverse that might have befallen us. What is it, Hanks?” cried he, as that gentleman endeavored to get near him.

“You’ll have to show yourself, sir; you must positively address them in a few words from the balcony.”

“I do not think so, Hanks. This is a mere momentary burst of popular feeling.”

“Not at all, sir. Listen to them now; they are shouting madly for you. To decline the call will be taken as pride. I implore you to come out, if only for a few minutes.”

“I suppose he is right, Dunn,” said Lord Glengariff, half doggedly. “For my own part, I have not the slightest pretension to say how popular demonstrations – I believe that is the word for them – are to be treated. Street gatherings, in my day, were called mobs, and dispersed by horse police; our newer civilization parleys to them and flatters them. I suppose you understand the requirements of the times we live in.”

The clamor outside was now deafening, and by its tone seemed, in some sort, to justify what Hanks had said, that Dunn’s indifference to their demands would be construed into direct insult.

“Do it at once!” cried Hanks, eagerly, “or it will be too late. A few words spoken now will save us thirty thousand pounds to-morrow.”

This whisper in Dunn’s ear decided the question, and, turning to the Earl, he said, “I believe, my Lord, Mr. Hanks is right; I ought to show myself.”

“Come along, then,” said the old Lord, heartily; and he took his arm with an air that said, “I ‘ll stand by you throughout.”

Scarcely had Dunn entered the drawing-room, than Lady Augusta met him, her cheek flushed and her eyes flashing. “I am so glad,” cried she, “that you are going to address them. It is a proud moment for you.”

When the window opened, and Davenport Dunn appeared on the balcony, the wild roar of the multitude made the air tremble; for the cry was taken up by others in remote streets, and came echoing back, again and again. I have heard that consummate orators – men practised in all the arts of public speaking – have acknowledged that there is no such severe test, in the way of audience, as that mixed assemblage called a mob, wherein every class has its representative, and every gradation its type. Now, Dunn was not a great public speaker. The few sentences he was obliged to utter on the occasions of his health being drunk cost him no uncommon uneasiness; he spoke them, usually, with faltering accents and much diffidence. It happens, however, that the world is often not displeased at these small signs of confusion – these little defects in oratorical readiness – in men of acknowledged ability, and even prefer them to the rapid flow and voluble ease of more practised orators. There is, so to say, a mock air of sincerity in the professions of a man whose feelings seem fuller than his words, – something that implies the heart to be in the right place, though the tongue be but a poor exponent of its sentiments; and lastly, the world is always ready to accept the embarrassment of the speaker as an evidence of the grateful emotions that are swaying him. Hence the success of country gentlemen in the House; hence the hearty cheers that follow the rambling discursiveness of bucolic eloquence!

If Mr. Dunn was not an orator, he was a keen and shrewd observer, and one fact he had noticed, which was that the shouts and cries of popular assemblages are to an indifferent speaker pretty much what an accompaniment is to a bad singer, – the aids by which he surmounts difficult passages and conceals his false notes. Mr. Hanks, too, well understood how to lead this orchestra, and had already taken his place on the steps of the door beneath.

Dunn stood in front of the balcony, Lord Glengariff at his side and a little behind him. With one hand pressed upon his heart, he bowed deeply to the multitude. “My kind friends,” said he, in a low voice, but which was audible to a great distance, “it has been my fortune to have received at different times of my life gratifying assurances of sympathy and respect, but never in the whole course of a very varied career do I remember an occasion so deeply gratifying to my feelings as the present. (Cheers, that lasted ten minutes and more.) It is not,” resumed he, with more energy, – “it is not at a moment like this, surrounded by brave and warm hearts, when the sentiments of affection that sway *you* are mingled with the emotions of my own breast, that I would take a dark or gloomy view of human nature, but truth compels me to say that the attack made this day upon my credit – for *I* am the Ossory Bank – (loud and wild cheering) – yes, I repeat it, for the stability of this institution *I* am responsible by all I possess in this world. Every share, every guinea, every acre I own are here! Far from me to impute ungenerous or unworthy motives to any quarter; but, my worthy friends, there has been foul play – (groans) – there has been treachery – (deeper groans) – and my name is not Davenport Dunn but it shall be exposed and punished. (Cries of “More power to ye,” and hearty cheers, greeted this solemn assurance.)

“I am, as you are well aware, and I glory in declaring it, one of yourselves. (Here the enthusiasm was tremendous.) By moderate abilities, hard work, and unflinching honesty – for that is the great secret – I have become that you see me to-day! (Loud cheering.) If there be amongst you any who aspire to my position, I tell him that nothing is easier than to attain it. I was a poor scholar – you know what a poor scholar is – when the generous nobleman you see now at my side first noticed me. (Three cheers for the Lord were proposed and given most heartily.) His generous patronage gave me my first impulse in life. I soon learned how to do the rest. (“That ye did;” “More power and success to ye,” here ran through the mob.) Now, it was at the table of that noble Lord – enjoying the first real holiday in thirty years of toil – that I received a telegraphic despatch, informing me there would be a run for gold upon this Bank before the week was over. I vow to you I did not believe it. I spurned the tidings as a base calumny upon the people, and as I handed the despatch to his Lordship

to read, I said, 'If this be possible – and I doubt it much – it is the treacherous intrigue of an enemy, not the spontaneous movement of the public.' (Here Lord Glengariff bowed an acquiescence to the statement, a condescension on his part that speedily called for three vociferous cheers for “the Lord,” once more.)

“I am no lawyer,” resumed Dunn, with vigor, – “I am a plain man of the people, whose head was never made for subtleties; but this I tell you, that if it be competent for me to offer a reward for the discovery of those who have hatched this conspiracy, my first care will be on my return to Dublin to propose ten thousand pounds for such information as may establish their guilt! (Cheering for a long time followed these words.) They knew that they could not break the Bank, – in their hearts they knew that our solvency was as complete as that of the Bank of England itself, – but they thought that by a panic, and by exciting popular feeling against me, I, in my pride of heart and my conscious honesty, might be driven to some indignant reaction; that I might turn round and say, Is this the country I have slaved for? Are these the people for whose cause I have neglected personal advancement, and disregarded the flatteries of the great? Are these the rewards of days of labor and nights of anxiety and fatigue?”

They fancied, possibly, that, goaded by what I might have construed into black ingratitude, I would say, like Coriolanus, ‘I banish you!’ But they little knew either you or me, my warm-hearted friends! (Deafening cheers.) They little knew that the well-grounded confidence of a nation cannot be obliterated by the excitement of a moment. A panic in the commercial, like a thunder-storm in the physical world, only leaves the atmosphere lighter, and the air fresher than before; and so I say to you, we shall all breathe more freely when we rise to-morrow, – no longer to see the dark clouds overhead, nor hear the rumbling sounds that betoken coming storm.

“I have detained you too long. (“No, no!” vociferously broke forth.) I have spoken also too much about myself. (“Not a bit; we could listen to ye till mornin’,” shouted a wild voice, that drew down hearty laughter.) But, before I go, I wish to say, that, hard pressed as we are in the Bank – sorely inconvenienced by the demands upon us – I am yet able to ask your excellent Mayor to accept of five hundred pounds from me for the poor of this city – (what a yell followed this announcement! plainly indicating what a personal interest the tidings seemed to create) – and to add – (loud cheers) – and to add – (more cheers) – and to add,” cried he, in his deepest voice, “that the first toast I will drink this day shall be, The Boys of Kilkenny!”

It is but justice to add that Mr. Dunn’s speech was of that class of oratory that “hears” better than it reads, while his audience was also less critically disposed than may be our valued reader. At all events, it achieved a great success; and within an hour after its delivery hawkers cried through the streets of the city, “The Full and True Account of the Run for Gold, with Mr. Dunn’s Speech to the People;” and, sooth to say, that though the paper was not “cream laid,” and though many of the letters were upside down, the literature had its admirers, and was largely read. Later on, the city was illuminated, two immense letters of D. D. figuring in colored lamps in front of the town-hall, while copious libations of whiskey-punch were poured forth in honor of the Man of the People. In every rank and class, from the country gentleman who dined at the club-house, to the smallest chop-house in John Street, there was but one sentiment, – that Dunn was a fine fellow, and his enemies downright scoundrels. If a few of nicer taste and more correct feeling were not exactly pleased with his speech, they wisely kept their opinions to themselves, and let “the Ayes have it,” who pronounced it to be manly, above-board, modest, and so forth.

Throughout the entire evening Mr. Hankes was everywhere, personally or through his agents; his care was to collect public sentiment, to ascertain what popular opinion thought of the whole events of the morning, and to promote, so far as he could with safety, the flattering estimate already formed of his chief. Scarcely half an hour elapsed without Dunn’s receiving from his indefatigable lieutenant some small scrap of paper, with a few words hastily scrawled in this fashion: —

“Rice and Walsh’s, Nine o’clock. – Company in the coffee-room enthusiastic; talk of a public dinner; some propose portrait in town-hall.”

“A quarter to Ten, Judy’s, Rose Inn Street. – Comic song, with a chorus: —

“If for gold ye run,
Says the Shan van Voght;
If for gold ye run,
I’ll send for Davy Dunn,
He’s the boy to show ye fun,
Says the Shan van Voght!”

“Eleven o’clock, High Street. – Met the Dean, who says, ‘D. D. is an honor to us; we are all proud of him.’ The county your own when you want it.”

“Twelve o’clock. – If any one should venture to ask for gold to-morrow, he will be torn to pieces by the mob.”

Assuredly it was a triumph; and every time that the wild cheers from the crowds in the street broke in upon the converse in the drawing-room, Lady Augusta’s eyes would sparkle as she said, “I don’t wonder at your feeling proud of it all!”

And he *did* feel proud of it. Strange as it may seem, he was as proud as though the popularity had been earned by the noblest actions and the most generous devotion. We are not going to say why or wherefore this. And now for a season we take our leave of him to follow the fortunes of some others whose fate we seem to have forgotten. We have the less scruple for deserting Davenport Dunn at this moment, that we leave him happy, prospering, and in good company.

CHAPTER III. A NOTE FROM DAVIS

Am I asking too much of my esteemed reader, if I beg of him to remember where and how I last left the Honorable Annesley Beecher? for it is to that hopeful individual and his fortunes I am now about to return.

If it be wearisome to the reader to have his attention suddenly drawn from the topic before him, and his interest solicited for those he has well-nigh forgotten, let me add that it is almost as bad for the writer, who is obliged to hasten hither and thither, and, like a huntsman with a stragglng pack, to urge on the tardy, correct the loiterer, and repress the eager.

When we parted with Annesley Beecher, he was in sore trouble and anxiety of mind; a conviction was on him that he was “squared,” “nobbled,” “crossed,” “potted,” or something to the like intent and with a like euphonious designation. “The Count and Spicer were conspiring to put him in a hole!” As if any “hole” could be as dark, as hopeless, and as deep as the dreary pitfall of his own helpless nature!

His only resource seemed flight; to break cover at once and run for it, appeared the solitary solution of the difficulty. There was many a spot in the map of Europe which offered a sanctuary against Grog Davis. But what if Grog were to set the law in motion, where should he seek refuge then? Some one had once mentioned to him a country with which no treaty connected us with regard to criminals. It began, if he remembered aright, with an S; was it Sardinia or Sweden or Spain or Sicily or Switzerland? It was surely one of them, but which? “What a mass of rubbish, to be sure,” thought he, “they crammed me with at Rugby, but not one solitary particle of what one could call useful learning! See now, for instance, what benefit a bit of geography might be to me!” And he rambled on in his mind, concocting an educational scheme which would really fit a man for the wear and tear of life.

It was thus reflecting he entered the inn and mounted to his room; his clothes lay scattered about, drawers were crammed with his wearables, and the table covered with a toilet equipage, costly, and not yet paid for. Who was to pack all these? Who was to make up that one portmanteau which would suffice for flight, including all the indispensable and rejecting the superfluous? There is a case recorded of a Frenchman who was diverted from his resolve on suicide by discovering that his pistols were not loaded, and, incredible as it may seem, Beecher was deterred from his journey by the thought of how he was to pack his trunk; He had never done so much for himself since he was born, and he did n’t think he could do it; at all events, he wasn’t going to try. Certain superstitious people are impressed with the notion that making a will is a sure prelude to dying; so others there are who fancy that, by the least effort on their own behalf, they are forecasting a state of poverty in which they must actually work for subsistence.

How hopelessly, then, did he turn over costly waistcoats and embroidered shirts, gaze on richly cut and crested essence-bottles and boot-boxes, whose complexity resembled mathematical instruments! In what manner they were ever conveyed so far he could not imagine. The room seemed actually filled with them. It was Rivers had “put them up;” but Rivers could no longer be trusted, for he was evidently in the “lay” against him.

He sighed heavily at this: it was a dreary, hopeless sigh over the depravity of the world and mankind in general. “And what a paradise it might be,” he thought, “if people would only let themselves be cheated quietly and peaceably, neither threatening with their solicitors, nor menacing with the police. Heaven knew how little he asked for: a safe thing now and then on the Derby, a good book on the Oaks; he wanted no more! He bore no malice nor ill-will to any man breathing; he never wished to push any fellow to the wall. If ever there was a generous heart, it beat in *his* bosom; and if the world only knew the provocation he had received! No matter, he would never retaliate, – he ‘d die game, be a brick to the last;” and twenty other fine things of the same sort that actually brought the tears to his own eyes over his own goodness.

Goodness, however, will not pack a trunk, nor will moral qualities, however transcendent, fold cravats and dress-coats, and he looked very despondently around him, and thought over what he half fancied was the only thing he could n't do. So accustomed had he been of late to seek Lizzy Davis's counsel in every moment of difficulty, that actually, without knowing it, he descended now to the drawing-room, some vague, undefined feeling impelling him to be near her.

She was singing at the piano, all alone, as he entered; the room, as usual, brilliantly lighted up as if to receive company, rare flowers and rich plants grouped tastefully about, and "Daisy" – for she looked that name on this occasion – in one of those charming "toilettes" whose consummate skill it is to make the most costly articles harmonize into something that seems simplicity itself. She wore a fuchsia in her hair, and another – only this last was of coral and gold elaborately and beautifully designed – on the front of her dress, and, except these, nothing more of ornament.

"Tutore mio," said she, gayly, as he entered, "you have treated me shamefully; for, first of all, you were engaged to drive with me to the Kreutz Berg, and, secondly, to take me to the opera, and now, at half-past nine, you make your appearance. How is this, Monsieur? *Expliquez-vous.*"

"Shall I tell the truth?" said he.

"By all means, if anything so strange should n't embarrass you."

"Well, then, I forgot all about both the drive and the opera. It's all very well to laugh," said he, in a tone of half pique; "young ladies, with no weightier cares on their hearts than whether they ought to wear lilac or green, have very little notion of a man's anxieties. They fancy that life is a thing of white and red roses, soft music and bouquets; but it ain't."

"Indeed! are you quite sure?" asked she, with an air of extreme innocence.

"I suspect I am," said he, confidently; "and there's not many a man about town knows more of it than I do."

"And now, what may be the cares, or, rather, for I don't want to be curious, what sort of cares are they that oppress that dear brain? Have you got any wonderful scheme for the amelioration of mankind to which you see obstacles? Are your views in politics obstructed by ignorance or prejudice? Have you grand notions about art for which the age is not ripe; or are you actually the author of a wonderful poem that nobody has had taste enough to appreciate?"

"And these are your ideas of mighty anxieties, Miss Lizzy?" said he, in a tone of compassionate pity. "By Jove! how I'd like to have nothing heavier on my heart than the whole load of them."

"I think you have already told me you never were crossed in love?"

"Well, nothing serious, you know. A scratch or so, as one may say, getting through the bushes, but never a cropper, – nothing like a regular smash."

"It would seem to me, then, that you have enjoyed a singularly fortunate existence, and been just as lucky in life as myself."

Beecher started at the words. What a strange chaos did they create within him! There is no tracing the thoughts that came and went, and lost themselves in that poor bewildered head. The nearest to anything like consistency was the astonishment he felt that she – Grog Davis's daughter – should ever imagine she had drawn a prize in the world's lottery.

"Yes, Mr. Beecher," said she, with the ready tact with which she often read his thoughts and answered them, "even so. I do think myself very, very fortunate! And why should I not? I have excellent health, capital spirits, fair abilities, and, bating an occasional outbreak of anger, a reasonably good temper. As regards personal traits, Mr. Annesley Beecher once called me beautiful; Count Lienstahl would say something twice as rapturous; at all events, quite good-looking enough not to raise antipathies against me at first sight; and lastly, but worth all the rest, I have an intense enjoyment in mere existence; the words 'I live' are to me, 'I am happy.' The alternations of life, its little incidents and adventures, its passing difficulties, are, like the changeful aspects of the seasons, full of interest, full of suggestiveness, calling out qualities of mind and resources of temperament that in the cloudless

skies of unbroken prosperity might have lain unused and unknown. And now, sir, no more sneers at my fancied good fortune; for, whatever *you* may say, I feel it to be real.”

There was that in her manner – a blended energy and grace – which went far deeper into Beecher’s heart than her mere words, and he gazed at her slightly flushed cheek and flashing eyes with something very nearly rapture; and he muttered to himself, “There she is, a half-bred ‘un, and no training, and able to beat them all!”

This time, at all events, she did not read his thoughts; as little, perhaps, did she care to speculate about them. “By the by,” said she, suddenly approaching the chimney and taking up a letter, “this has arrived here, by private hand, since you went out, and it has a half-look of papa’s writing, and is addressed to you.”

Beecher took it eagerly. With a glance he recognized it as from Grog, when that gentleman desired to disguise his hand.

“Am I correct?” asked she, – “am I correct in my guess?”

He was too deep in the letter to make her any reply. Its contents were as follows: —

“Dear B., – They ‘ve kicked up such a row about that affair at Brussels that I have been obliged to lie dark for the last fortnight, and in a confoundedly stupid hole on the right bank of the Rhine. I sent over Spicer to meet the Baron, and take Klepper over to Nimroeguen and Magdeburg, and some other small places in Prussia. They can pick up in this way a few thousand florins, and keep the mill going. I gave him strict orders not to see my daughter, who must know nothing whatever of these or any like doings. The Baron she might see, for he knows life thoroughly, and if he is not a man of high honor, he can assume the part so well that it comes pretty much to the same thing. As to yourself, you will, on receipt of this, call on a certain Lazarus Stein, Juden Gasse, Nov 41 or 42, and give him your acceptance for two thousand gulden, with which settle your hotel bill, and come on to Bonn, where, at the post-office, you will find a note, with my address. Tramp, you see, has won the Cotteswold, as I prophesied, and ‘Leo the Tenth’ nowhere.

Cranberry must have got his soup pretty hot, for he has come abroad, and his wife and the children gone down to Scotland.

As to your own affairs, Ford says you are better out of the way; and if anything is to be done in the way of compromise, it must be while you are abroad. He does not think Strich can get the rule, and you must n’t distress yourself for an extra outlawry or two. There will be some trouble about the jewels, but I think even that matter may be arranged also. I hope you keep from the tables, and I look for a strict reckoning as to your expenses, and a stricter book up as regards your care of my daughter. ‘All square’ is the word between pal and pal, and there never was born the man did n’t find that to be his best policy when he dealt with

“Your friend,

“Christopher Davis.

“To while away the time in this dreary dog-hole, I have been sketching out a little plan of a martingale for the roulette-table. There’s only one zero at Homburg, and we can try it there as we go up. There’s a flaw in it after the twelfth ‘pass,’ but I don’t despair of getting over the difficulty. Old Stein, the money-changer, was upwards of thirty years croupier at the Cursaal, and get him to tell you the average runs, black and red, at rouge-et-noir, and what are the signs of an intermitting game; and also the six longest runs he has ever known. He is a shrewd fellow, and seeing that you come from me will be confidential.

“There has been another fight in the Crimea, and somebody well licked. I had nothing on the match, and don’t care a brass farthing who claimed the stakes.

“Tell Lizzy that I ‘m longing to see her, and if I didn’t write it is because I ‘m keeping everything to tell her when we meet. If it was n’t for her picture, I don’t know what would have become of me since last Tuesday, when the rain set in.”

Beecher re-read the letter from the beginning; nor was it an easy matter for him to master at once all the topics it included. Of himself and his own affairs the information was vague and unsatisfactory; but Grog knew how to keep him always in suspense, – to make him ever feel that he was swimming for his life, and he himself the only “spar” he could catch at.

“Bring me to book about my care of his daughter!” muttered he, over and over, “just as if she was n’t the girl to take care of herself. Egad! he seems to know precious little about her. I ‘d give a ‘nap’ to show her this letter, and just hear what she ‘d say of it all. I suppose she ‘d split on me. She ‘d go and tell Davis, ‘Beecher has put me up to the whole “rig;” and if she did – What would happen then?” asked he, replying to the low, plaintive whistle which concluded his meditation. “Eh – what! did I say anything?” cried he, in terror.

“Not a syllable. But I could see that you had conjured up some difficulty which you were utterly unable to deal with.”

“Well, here it is,” said he, boldly. “This letter is from your father. It’s all full of private details, of which you know nothing, nor would you care to hear; but there is one passage – just one – that I’d greatly like to have your opinion upon. At the same time I tell you, frankly, I have no warranty from your father to let you see it; nay, the odds are he ‘d pull me up pretty sharp for doing so without his authority.”

“That’s quite enough, Mr. Beecher, about *your* scruples. Now, *mine* go a little further still; for they would make me refuse to learn anything which my father’s reserve had kept from me. It is a very easy rule of conscience, and neither hard to remember nor to follow.”

“At all events, he meant this for your own eye,” said Beecher, showing her the last few lines of the letter.

She read them calmly over; a slight trembling of the lip – so slight that it seemed rather like a play of light over her face – was the only sign of emotion visible, and then, carefully folding the letter, she gave it back, saying, “Yes, I had a right to see these lines.”

“He *is* fond of you, and proud of you, too,” said Beecher. A very slight nod of her head gave an assent to his remark, and she was silent. “We are to leave this at once,” continued he, “and move on to Bonn, where we shall find a letter with your father’s address, somewhere, I take it, in that neighborhood.” He waited, hoping she would say something, but she did not speak. And then he went on:

“And then you will be once more at home, – emancipated from this tiresome guardianship of mine.”

“Why tiresome?” asked she, suddenly.

“Oh, by Jove! I know I ‘m very slow sort of fellow as a ladies’ man; have none of the small talents of those foreigners; couldn’t tell Mozart from Verdi; nor, though I can see when a woman is well togged, could I tell you the exact name of any one part of her dress.”

“If you really did know all these, and talked of them, I might have found you very tiresome,” said she, in that half-careless voice she used when seeming to think aloud. “And you,” asked she, suddenly, as she turned her eyes fully upon him, – “and you, are you to be emancipated then, – are you going to leave us?”

“As to that,” replied he, in deep embarrassment, “there ‘a a sort of hitch in it I ought, if I did the right thing, to be on my way to Italy now, to see Lackington, – my brother, I mean. I came abroad for that; but Gr – your father, I should say – induced me to join *him*, and so, with one thing and the other, here I am, and that’s really all I know about it.”

“What a droll way to go through life!” said she, with one of her low, soft laughs.

“If you mean that I have n’t a will of my own, you ‘re all wrong,” said he, in some irritation. “Put me straight at my fence, and see if I won’t take it. Just say, ‘A. B., there’s the winning-post,’ and mark whether I won’t get my speed up.”

What a strange glance was that which answered this speech! It implied no assent; as little did it mean the reverse. It was rather the look of one who, out of a maze of tangled fancies, suddenly felt recalled to life and its real interests. To poor Beecher’s apprehension it simply seemed a sort of half-compassionate pity, and it made his cheek tingle with wounded pride.

“I know,” muttered he to himself, “that she thinks me a confounded fool; but I ain’t. Many a fellow in the ring made that mistake, and burned his fingers for it after.”

“Well,” said she, after a moment or so of thought, “I am ready; at least, I shall be ready very soon. I ‘ll tell Annette to pack up and prepare for the road.”

“I wish I could get you to have some better opinion of me, Miss Lizzy,” said he, seriously. “I’d give more than I ‘d like to say, that you ‘d – you ‘d – ”

“That I’d what?” asked she, calmly.

“That you ‘d not set me down as a regular flat,” said he, with energy.

“I ‘m not very certain that I know what that means; but I will tell you that I think you very good tempered, very gentle-natured, and very tolerant of fifty-and-one caprices which must be all the more wearisome because unintelligible. And then, you are a very fine gentleman, and – the Honorable Annesley Beecher.” And holding out her dress in minuet fashion, she courtesied deeply, and left the room.

“I wish any one would tell me whether I stand to win or not by that book,” exclaimed Beecher, as he stood there alone, nonplussed and confounded. “Would n’t she make a stunning actress! By Jove! Webster would give her a hundred a week, and a free benefit!” And with this he went off into a little mental arithmetic, at the end of which he muttered to himself, “And that does not include starring it in the provinces!”

With the air of a man whose worldly affairs went well, he arranged his hair before the glass, put on his hat, gave himself a familiar nod, and went out.

CHAPTER IV. LAZARUS, STEIN, GELDWECHSLER

The Juden Gasse, in which Beecher was to find out the residence of Lazarus Stein, was a long, straggling street, beginning in the town and ending in the suburb, where it seemed as it were to lose itself. It was not till after a long and patient search that Beecher discovered a small door in an old ivy-covered wall, on which, in irregular letters, faint and almost illegible, stood the words, "Stein, Geldwechsler."

As he rang stoutly at the bell, the door opened, apparently of itself, and admitted him into a large and handsome garden. The walks were flanked by fruit-trees in espalier, with broad borders of rich flowers at either side; and although the centre spaces were given up to the uses of a kitchen garden, the larger beds, rich in all the colors of the tulip and ranunculus, showed how predominant was the taste for flowers over mere utility. Up one alley, and down another, did Beecher saunter without meeting any one, or seeing what might mean a habitation; when, at length, in a little copse of palm-trees, he caught sight of a small diamond-paned window, approaching which, he found himself in front of a cottage whose diminutive size he had never seen equalled, save on the stage. Indeed, in its wooden framework, gaudily painted, its quaint carvings, and its bamboo roof, it was the very type of what one sees in a comic opera. One sash of the little window lay open, and showed Beecher the figure of a very small old man, who, in a long dressing-gown of red-brown stuff, and a fez cap, was seated at a table, writing. A wooden tray in front of him was filled with dollars and gold pieces in long stately columns, and a heap of bank-notes lay pressed under a heavy leaden slab at his side. No sooner had Beecher's figure darkened the window than the old man looked up and came out to meet him, and, taking off his cap with a deep reverence, invited him to enter. If the size of the chamber, and its curious walls covered over with cabinet pictures, might have attracted Beecher's attention at another moment, all his wonderment, now, was for the little man himself, whose piercing black eyes, long beard, and hooked nose gave him an air of almost unearthly meaning.

"I suppose I have the honor to speak to Mr. Stein?" said he, in English, "and that he can understand me in my own tongue?"

"Yaas, – go on," said the old man.

"I was told to call upon you by Captain Davis; he gave me your address."

"Ah, der Davis – der Davis – a vaary goot man – my vaary dear friend. You are der rich Englander that do travel wit him, – eh?"

"I am travelling with him just now," said Beecher, laughing slightly; "but as to being rich, – why, we 'll not dispute about it."

"Yaas, here is his letter. He says, Milord will call on you hisself, and so I hold myself – how you say 'bereit?' – ready – hold myself ready to see you. I have de honor to make you very mush welcome to my poor house."

Beecher thanked him courteously, and, producing Davis's letter, mentioned the amount for which he desired to draw.

The old man examined the writing, the signature, and then the seal, handing the document back when he had finished, muttering to himself, "Ah, der Davis – der Davis!"

"You know my friend very intimately, I believe?" asked Beecher.

"I belief I do, – I belief I do," said he, with a low chuckle to himself.

"So he mentioned to me and added one or two little matters on which I was to ask you for some information. But first this bill, – you can let me have these two thousand florins?"

"And what do he do now, der Davis?" asked the Jew, not heeding the question.

"Well, I suppose he rubs on pretty much the same as ever," said Beecher, in some confusion.

"Yaas – yaas – he rub on – and he rub off, too, sometimes – ha! ha! ha!" laughed out the old man, with a fiendish cackle. "Ach, der Davis!"

Without knowing in what sense to take the words, Beecher did not exactly like them; and as little was he pleased with that singular recurrence to “der Davis,” and the little sigh that followed. He was growing impatient, besides, to get his money, and again reverted to the question.

“He look well? I hope he have de goot gesundheit – what you call it?”

“To be sure he does; nothing ever ails him. I never heard him complain of as much as a headache.

“Ach, der Davis, der Davis!” said the old man, shaking his head.

Seeing no chance of success by his direct advances, Beecher thought he ‘d try a little flank attack by inducing a short conversation, and so he said, “I am on my way to Davis, now, with his daughter, whom he left in my charge.”

“Whose daughter?” asked the Jew.

“Davis’s, – a young lady that was educated at Brussels.”

“He have no daughter. Der Davis have no daughter.”

“Has n’t he, though? Just come over to the ‘Four Nations,’ and I ‘ll show her to you. And such a stunning girl too!”

“No, no, I never belief it – never; he did never speak to me of a daughter.”

“Whether he did or not – there she is, that’s all I know.”

The Jew shook his head, and sought refuge in his former muttering of “Ach, der Davis!”

“As far as not telling you about his daughter, I can say he never told me, and I fancy we were about as intimate as most people; but the fact is as I tell you.”

Another sigh was all his answer, and Beecher was fast reaching the limit of his patience.

“Daughter, or no daughter, I want a matter of a couple of thousand florins, – no objection to a trifle more, of course, – and wish to know how you can let me have them.”

“The Margraf was here two week ago, and he say to me, ‘Lazarus,’ say he, – ‘Lazarus, where is your goot friend Davis?’ ‘Highness,’ say I, ‘dat I know not.’ Den he say, ‘I will find him, if I go to Jerusalem;’ and I say, ‘Go to Jerusalem.’”

“What did he want with him?”

“What he want? – what every one want, and what nobody get, except how he no like – ha! ha! ha! Ach, der Davis!”

Beecher rose from his seat, uncertain how to take this continued inattention to his demand. He stood for a moment in hesitation, his eyes wandering over the walls where the pictures were hanging.

“Ah! if you do care for art, now you suit yourself, and all for a noting! I sell all dese, – dat Gerard Dow, dese two Potters, de leetle Cuyp, – a veritable treasure, and de Mieris, – de best he ever painted, and de rest, wit de land-schaft of Both, for eighty tousand seven hundred florins. It is a schenk – a gift away – noting else.”

“You forget, my excellent friend Stein,” said Beecher, with more assurance than he had yet assumed, “that it was to receive and not spend money I came here this morning.”

“You do a leetle of all de two – a leetle of both, so to say,” replied the Jew. “What moneys you want?”

“Come, this is speaking reasonably. Davis’s letter mentions a couple of thousand florins; but if you are inclined to stretch the amount to five, or even four thousand, we ‘ll not fall out about the terms.”

“How you mean – no fall out about de terms?” said the other, sharply.

“I meant that for a stray figure or so, in the way of discount, we should n’t disagree. You may, in fact, make your own bargain.”

“Make my own bargain, and pay myself too,” muttered the Jew. “Ach, der Davis, how he would laugh! – ha! ha! ha!”

“Well, I don’t see much to laugh at, old gent, except it be at my own folly, to stand here so long chaffering about these paltry two thousand florins. And now I say, ‘Yea or nay, will you book up, or not?’”

“Will you buy de Cuyp and de Wouvermans and de Ostade? – dat is the question.”

“Egad, if you furnish the ready, I ‘ll buy the Cathedral and the Cursaal. I ‘m not particular as to the investment when the cash is easily come at.”

“De cash is very easy to come at,” said the Jew, with a strange grin.

“You ‘re a trump, Lazarus!” cried Beecher, in ecstasy at his good fortune. “If I had known you some ten years ago, I ‘d have been another man to-day. I was always looking out for one really fair, honester-hearted fellow to deal with, but I never met with him till now.”

“How you have it, – gold or notes?” said Lazarus.

“Well, a little of both, I think,” said Beecher, his eyes greedily devouring the glittering little columns of gold before him.

“How your title? – how your name?” asked Stein, taking up a pen.

“My name is Annesley Beecher. You may write me the ‘Honorable Annesley Beecher.’”

“Lord of – ”

“I ‘m not Lord of anything. I’m next in succession to a peerage, that’s all.”

“He call you de Viscount – I forget de name.”

“Lackington, perhaps?”

“Yaas, dat is de name; and say, give him de moneys for his bill. Now, here is de acceptance, and here you put your sign, across dis.”

“I ‘ll write Annesley Beecher, with all my heart; but I ‘ll not write myself Lackington.”

“Den you no have de moneys, nor de Cuyp, nor de Ostade,” said the Jew, replacing the pen in the ink-bottle.

“Just let me ask you, old boy, how would it benefit you that I should commit a forgery? Is that the way you like to do business?”

“I do know myself how I like my business to do, and no man teach me.”

“What the devil did Davis mean, then, by sending me on this fool’s errand? He gave me a distinct intimation that you ‘d cash my acceptance – ”

“Am I not ready? You never go and say to der Davis dat I refuse it! Ah, der Davis!” and he sighed as if from the very bottom of his heart.

“I’ll tell him, frankly, that you made it a condition I was to sign a name that does not belong to me, —*that* I ‘ll tell him.”

“What care he for dat? Der Davis write his own name on it and pay it hisself.”

“Oh! and Davis was also to indorse this bill, was he?” asked Beecher.

“I should tink he do; oderwise I scarce give you de moneys.”

“That, indeed, makes some difference. Not, in reality, that it would n’t be just as much a forgery; but if the bill come back to Grog’s own hands – ”

“Ach, der Grog, – ha! ha! ha! ‘Tis so long dat I no hear de name, – Grog Davis!” and the Jew laughed till his eyes ran over.

“If there’s no other way of getting at this money – ”

“Dere is no oder way,” said Lazarus, in a tone of firmness..

“Then good-morning, friend Lazarus, for you ‘ll not catch me spoiling a stamp at that price. No, no, old fellow. I ‘m up to a thing or two, though you don’t suspect it. I only rise to the natural fly, and no mistake.”

“I make no mistake; I take vaary goot care of dat,” said Lazarus, rising, and taking off his fez, to say adieu. “I wish you de vaary goot day.”

Beecher turned away, with a stiff salutation, into the garden. He was angry with Davis, with himself, and with the whole world. It was a rare event in his life to see gold so much within his reach

and yet not available, just for a scruple – a mere scruple – for, after all, what was it else? Writing “Lackington” meant nothing, if Lack-ington were never to see, much less to pay the bill. Once “taken up,” as it was sure to be by Grog, what signified it if the words across the acceptance were Lackington or Annesley Beecher? And yet, what could Davis mean by passing him off as the Viscount? Surely, for such a paltry sum as a couple of thousand florins, it was not necessary to assume his brother’s name and title. It was some “dodge,” perhaps, to acquire consequence in the eyes of his friend Lazarus that he was the travelling-companion of an English peer; and yet, if so, it was the very first time Beecher had known him yield to such a weakness. He *had* a meaning in it, that much was certain, for Grog made no move in the game of life without a plan! “It can’t be,” muttered Beecher to himself, – “it can’t be for the sake of any menace over me for the forgery, because he has already in his hands quite enough to push me to the wall on that score, as he takes care to remind me he might any fine morning have me ‘up’ on that charge.” The more Beecher ruminated over what possible intention Davis might have in view, the more did he grow terrified, lest, by any short-comings on his own part, he might thwart the great plans of his deep colleague.

“I never met his equal yet to put a fellow in a cleft stick,” muttered Beecher, as he walked to and fro in intense agitation, “and he’s just the man also, whenever anything goes wrong, not to listen to a word of explanation. ‘Why didn’t you do as I bade you?’ or, ‘As I ordered you?’ for that’s his phrase generally. ‘Who told *you* that you had any option in the matter? Did *I* take you into consultation? Play up to *my* hand!’ that’s his cry. ‘Play up to *my* hand, and never mind your own!’ Well, I have been doing so some ten or twelve years back, and a nice game I’ve made of it! Break with him! – of course I’d break with him, if any one would tell me how! Egad, sometimes I begin to think that transportation and the rest of it would not be a bit harder to bear than old Grog’s tyranny! It wears one out, – it positively drains a man’s nature dry!” There are volcanic throes, that, however they may work and struggle, throw up no lava; so with Beecher. All his passionate indignation could not rouse him to action, although his actual suffering might have prompted energy to any amount. He took out Davis’s letter and re-read it. One line which had escaped his attention before, now caught his eye on the blank leaf. It ran thus: “Take care that you do not delay at Aix after receipt of this. Benson’s fellows are after you.” A cold shudder came over Beecher as he perused the line. Benson’s fellows meant bailiffs, detectives, or something of the like. Benson was a money-lender of the most inveterate villany, – a fellow who had pursued more men of station and condition than any one living. He was the terror of the “swells.” To be in Benson’s hands meant ruin in its most irretrievable shape; and at the very moment he stood there his minions were on his track!

Ere he was well aware of it, he was back at the little window of the cottage.

“I must have this money on your own terms, Stein,” said he. “I find that Davis has some urgent need of my presence. I can’t delay here another day.”

“How many tousand gulden, milord?” asked the Jew respectfully, as he dipped his pen in the ink-bottle.

“Davis says two – I should like to say four, or even five.”

“Five if you wish it, milord; to me is it all as one – five, fifteen, or fifty; whatever sum you want.”

Beecher put his hand on the other’s wrist to detain him while he took a moment’s counsel with himself. Never had such a golden opportunity as this presented itself. Never before had he seen the man who so generously proffered his services. It was ask and have. Was he to reject such good fortune? – was he to turn his back on the very first piece of luck that had ever befallen him? What heartburnings might he be storing up for future years when he looked back to the time that, with a word, he might have made his fortune!

“But are you quite sure, friend Lazarus, that if I say eight or ten thousand, – for I don’t want more, – Davis will be as willing to back the bill?”

“I am quite sure.”

“Well, now, I am not so very certain of that; and as it is Davis will have to book up, it might be safer, perhaps, that I did n’t go beyond the amount he mentions, – eh?”

“As you will, – as you please yourself. I only say, dere is der Herr Davis’s name; he send it to me and say, ‘Milord will do de rest.’”

“So that he sent you a blank acceptance?” cried Beecher, in amazement.

“Yaas, Just as you see, – ‘Christopher Davis,’ and de flourish as usual. Ach, der Davis!” and he sighed once more.

The man who held Grog’s signature on a blank stamp assumed no common shape in Annesley Beecher’s eyes, and he continued to gaze on the old man with a strange sense of awe and astonishment. If he had not the document there before him on the table, he would not have believed it. The trustful courage of Van Amburgh, who used to place his head in the lion’s mouth, seemed poor in comparison with such heroic boldness as this; and he gazed at the writing in a sort of fascination.

“And Grog actually sent you that over by letter?” asked he again.

“Yaas, as you see,” was the calm answer.

“Well, here goes then, Abraham – Lazarus, I mean; make it out for a matter of – five – no, eight – hang it, let as say ten thousand florins when we are about it! Ten thousand, at six months, – eh?”

“Better at tree months, – we can always renew,” said Stein, calmly.

“Of course; and by that time we may want a little more liquor in the decanter, – eh! old boy?” said Beecher, laughing joyfully.

“To be sure, vaary mush more liquor as you want it.”

“What a brick!” said Beecher, clapping him on the shoulder in all the ecstasy of delight.

“Dere!” said the Jew, as he finished writing, “all is done; only to say where it be paid, – what bank at London.”

“Well, that is a bit of a puzzle, I must own!” said Beecher, rubbing his chin with an air of doubt and hesitation.

“Where do de Lord Lackington keep his account?” asked the Jew; and the question was so artfully posed that Beecher Answered promptly, —

“Harmer and Gore’s, Lombard Street, or Pall Mall, whichever you like.”

“Hanper and Gore. I know dem vaary well, – that will do; you do sign your name dere.”

“I wish I could persuade you that Annesley Beecher would be enough, – eh?”

“You write de name as der Davis say, and no oder!”

“Here goes, then! ‘In for a penny,’ as the proverb says,” muttered he; and in a bold, dashing hand, wrote “Lackington” across the bill.

“Ah!” said the Jew, as he examined it with his glass, and scanned every letter over and over; “and now, vat you say for de Cuyp, and de Mieris, and de Ostade, – vill you take ‘era all, as I say?”

“I ‘ll think over it, – I ‘ll reflect a bit first, Master Stein. As for pictures, they ‘re rather an encumbrance when a man has n’t a house to hang them in.”

“You have de vaary fine house in town, and an oder vaary fine house in de country, beside a what you call box – shoot-box – ”

“Nothing of the kind, Lazarus. I haven’t a thing as big as the crib we are standing in. Your mind is always running upon my brother; but there’s a wide difference between our fortunes, I assure you. He drew the first ticket in the lottery of life; and, by the way, that reminds me of something in Grog’s letter that I was to ask you.” And Beecher took the epistle from his pocket and ran his eye over it. “Ah! here it is! ‘Ask Stein what are the average runs at rouge-et-noir, what are the signs of an intermitting game, and what are the longest runs he remembers on one color?’ Can you answer me these?”

“Some of dem I have here,” said Stein, taking down from a shelf a small vellum-bound volume, fastened with a padlock and chain, the key of which he wore attached to his watch. “Here is de grand ‘arcanum,” said he, laughing; “here are de calculs made in de experience of forty-one year! Where is de man in Europe can say as mush as dat? In dis book is recounted de great game of de

Duc de Brancas, where he broke de bank every night of de week till Saturday, – two million tree hundred tousand francs! Caumartin, the first croupier, shot hisself, and Nogeot go mad. He reckon de moneys in de casette, for when he say on Friday night, ‘Monseigneur,’ say he, ‘we have not de full sum here, – there’s one hundred and seventy tousand francs too little,’ de Duc reply, ‘Never mind, mon cher Monsieur Nogeot, I am noways pressed, – don’t distress yourself, – only let it be pay before I go home to bed.’ Nogeot lose his reason when he hear it. Ah! here is de whole ‘Greschichte,’ and here de table of chances.”

Beecher gazed on the precious volume as Aladdin might have done on the lamp. It was the mystic key to untold riches. With that marvellous book a man needed no more in life; there lay all the “cabals,” all the “martingales,” that years of intense toil and deep study had discovered. To win that knowledge, too, what hearts had been broken, what desolation, what death! It was a record of martyrs in his eyes, and he really regarded it with a sort of rapturous veneration.

Old Lazarus did not fail to detect the expression of wonderment and admiration. He saw depicted there the glowing ecstasy that all the triumphs of high art could not call up. The vigorous energy of Wouvermans, the glowing coloring of Cuyp, the mellow richness of Mieris, had not touched that nature which now vibrated in every chord to the appeal of Fortune. It was the submissive worship of a devotee before some sacred relic! Stein read that gaze, and tracked its every motive; and with a solemn gesture he clasped the volume and locked it.

“But you are surely going to show me – I mean, you are about to tell me the answer to these questions?”

Stein shook his head dubiously, as he said: “Dat is my Kleinod, my idol, – in dat book lie de secret of secrets, and I say to myself, ‘Lazarus, be poor, be destitute, be houseless to-morrow, and you know how to get rich if you will.’ De great law of Chances – de rule dat guide what we call ‘Luck’ – dere it is written! I have but to say I will have, and I have! When I die, I will burn it, or have it lay wit me in my grave.”

“It’s not possible you could do this!” cried Beecher, in horror: far less of indignation had it cost him to hear that any one should carry out of the world with him the cure of cancer, of cholera, or some such dread scourge of poor humanity. The black-hearted selfishness of such a crime seemed without a parallel, and for a second or two, as he looked at the decrepid object before him, and saw the lonely spot, the isolation, and the propitious moment, a strange wild thought flashed across his mind that it might be not only pardonable, but praiseworthy, to seize upon and carry it off by force.

Whether the old man read what was passing within him is hard to say, but he returned the other’s look as steadily and as fiercely, and Beecher felt abashed and cowed.

“I’ll tell you what, Stein,” said he, after a pause, “I’ll buy that same old volume of yours, just for the curiosity of the thing, and I’ll make you a sporting offer, – I’ll give you ten thousand francs for it!”

A low wailing whistle of utter contempt was all the Jew replied.

“Well, it’s a splendid bid, if you come to think of it; for, just suppose it be everything you say – and I own I can’t believe it is, – but suppose it were, who is to guarantee the continuance of these great public play-tables? All the Governments of Europe are setting their faces against them, – not a year passes without one or two being closed. This very spring there was a talk of suppressing play at Baden. Who can tell what the first outbreak of fanatic zeal may effect?”

“No, no. So long as men live, dey will do tree tings, – make love, make war, and gamble. When dey give up dese, de world shut up.”

There was a truthful force about this Beecher felt could not be gainsaid, and he stood silent and confuted. There was another appeal that he had not tried, and he resolved to neglect nothing that gave even the faintest chance of success. He addressed himself to the Jew’s goodness of heart, – to the benevolence that he knew must have its home in his nature. To what end, therefore, should he carry to the grave, or destroy, a secret that might be a blessing to thousands? He depicted, not without knowledge, some of the miseries of the man “forgotten of Fortune,” – the days of fevered anxiety, –

the nights of agonizing torture, as, half maddened by his losses, he played wildly, recklessly on, – suicide in all its darkest forms ever present to his aching faculties, while all this time one glance within that little book would save him. And he wound up all by a burst of enthusiastic praise of a man who could thus transmit happiness to generations unborn.

“I never wish to sell dat book. I mean it alway to die wit myself! but if you will give me one thousand pounds, it is yours. If you delay, I will say two thousands.”

“Done – I take it. Of course a bill will do – eh?”

“Yaas, I will take a bill, – a bill at tree months. When it is yours, I will tell you dat you are de luckiest man in all Europe. You have dere, in dat leetle volume, all man strive for, fight for, cheat for, die for!”

As he said this, he sat down again at his desk to write the acceptance Beecher was to sign; while the other, withdrawing into the window recess, peered eagerly into the pages of the precious book.

“Mind,” said the Jew, “you no let any one see de ‘Cabal.’ If it be once get abroad, de bank will change de play. You just carry in your head de combinations, and you, go in, and win de millions dat you want at de time.”

“Just so,” said Beecher, in ecstasy, the very thought of the golden cataract sending a thrill of rapture through him. “I suppose, however, I may show it to Davis?”

“Ach, der Davis, yaas, – der Davis can see it,” said the Jew, with a laugh whose significance it were very hard to interpret. “Dere now,” said Stein, handing him the pen, “write de name dere as on de oder.”

“Still Lackington, I suppose – eh?” asked Beecher.

“Yaas, – just de same,” said Stein, gravely.

“‘Just as good for a sheep as a lamb,’ as the proverb says,” muttered Beecher. And he dashed off the name with a reckless flourish. “I ‘ll tell you one thing, Master Stein,” said he, as he buttoned up the magic volume in the breast of his coat, “if this turn out the good dodge you say it is, I ‘ll behave handsomely to you. I pledge you my word of honor, I ‘ll stand to you for double – treble the sum you have got written there. *You* don’t know the fellow you’re dealing with, – very few know him, for the matter of that, – but though he has got a smart lesson or two in life, he has good stuff in him still; and *if*– I say *if*, because, of course, all depends on *that*—*if* I can give the bank at Hamburg a spring in the air with the aid of this, I ‘ll not forget *you*, old boy.”

“You make dem all spring in de air! – Ems, Wiesbaden, Baden – all go up togeder!” And the Jew laughed with the glee of a demon.

“Not that I want to hurt any one, – not that I ‘d like to squeeze a fellow too hard,” broke in Beecher, suddenly, for a quick thrill of superstitious fear – the gambler’s innate conscience – shot through him, and made him tremble to think that by a chance word or thought he might disgust the Fortune he would propitiate. “No, no; my motto is, ‘Live and let live!’ There’s room for us all!” And with the utterance of a sentiment he believed so truly generous, he took leave of the Jew, and departed.

CHAPTER V. A VILLAGE NEAR THE RHINE

It was at a little village called Holbach, about fifteen miles from the right bank of the Rhine, Grog Davis had taken up his quarters while awaiting the arrival of his daughter. Near as it was to that great high-road of Europe, scarcely out of earshot of whizzing steamers and screaming trains, the spot was wonderfully secluded and unvisited. A little trout-stream, known to a few, who treasured the secret like fishermen, made the inn resorted to in the months of May and June; but for the rest of the year the "Golden Hook" had few customers, and the landlord almost abdicated his functions till spring came round again. The house, originally intended for a mill, was built over the river itself, so that the indolent angler might actually have fished from the very window. The pine-clad mountains of Nassau enclosed the narrow glen, which straggled irregularly along for miles, now narrowing to a mere strip, now expanding into little plains of fertile meadow-land, with neat cottages and speckled cattle scattered around them. A narrow belt of garden flanked the river, on whose edge a walk of trellised vines was fashioned, – a charming spot in the sultry heat of summer, with its luxuriant shade above and the rippling stream below. Davis had seen the place years before in some hurried Journey; but his retentive mind carried a full memory of the spot, and he soon found that it comprised all he was in search of, – it was easy of access, secret, and cheap.

Only too well pleased to meet with a guest at this dead season of the year, they gave up to him the choicest apartment, and treated him with every solicitude and attention.

His table was supplied well, almost luxuriously; the good wine of Etleberg given in liberal profusion; the vine alley converted into a pistol gallery for his use; and all for such a sum *per diem* as would not have satisfied a waiter at the Clarendon. But it was the calm seclusion, the perfect isolation that gratified him most. Let him stroll which way he would, he never chanced upon a traveller. It was marvellous, indeed, how such a place could have escaped that prying tribe of ramblers which England each year sends forth to wrangle, dispute, and disparage everything over Europe; and yet here were precisely the very objects they usually sought after, – beautiful scenery, a picturesque peasantry, and a land romantic in all its traits and traditions.

Not that Grog cared for these: rocks, waterfalls, ruins, leafy groves, or limpid streams made no appeal to *him*. He lived for the life of men, their passions and their ambitions. He knew some people admired this kind of thing, and there were some who were fond of literature; others liked pictures; others, again, fancied old coins. He had no objection. They were, if not very profitable, at least, harmless tastes. All he asked was, not to be the companion of such dreamers. "Give me the fellow that knows life," would he say; and I am afraid that the definition of that same "life" would have included some things scarcely laudable.

If the spot were one to encourage indolence and ease, Davis did not yield to this indulgence. He arose early; walked for health; shot with the pistol for practice; studied his martingale for the play-table; took an hour with the small-sword with an old maître d'armes whom he found in the village; and, without actually devoting himself to it as a task, practised himself in German by means of conversation; and, lastly, he thought deeply and intently over the future. For speculations of this kind he had no mean capacity. If he knew little of the human heart in its higher moods, he understood it well in its shortcomings and its weaknesses; to what temptations a man might yield, when to offer them, and how, were mysteries he had often brooded over. In forecastings of this order, therefore, Davis exercised himself. Strange eventualities, "cases of conscience," that I would fain believe never occurred to you, dear reader, nor to me, arose before him, and he met them manfully.

The world is generous in its admiration of the hard-worked minister, toiling night-long at his desk, receiving and answering his twenty despatches daily, and rising in the House to explain this, refute that, confirm the other, with all the clearness of an orator and all the calmness of a clerk; but, after all, he is but a fly-wheel in that machine of government of which there are some

hundred other component parts, all well fitting and proportioned. *Précis* writers and private secretaries cram, colleagues advise him. The routine of official life hedges him in his proper groove; and if not overcome by indolence or affected by zeal, he can scarcely blunder. Not so your man of straits and emergency, your fellow living by his wits, and wresting from the world, that fancies it does not want him, reward and recognition. It is no marvel if a proud three-decker sail round the globe; but very different is our astonishment if a cockboat come safely from the China Seas, or brave the stormy passage round the Cape. Such a craft as this was Grog, his own captain: himself the crew, he had neither owner nor underwriter; and yet, amidst the assembled navies of the world, he would have shown his bunting!

The unbroken calm of his present existence was most favorable to these musings, and left him to plan his campaign in perfect quiet. Whether the people of the inn regarded him as a great minister in disgrace come, by hard study, to retrieve a lost position, a man of science deeply immersed in some abstruse problem, or a distinguished author seeking isolation for the free exercise of his imagination, they treated him not only with great respect, but a sort of deference was shown in their studious effort to maintain the silence and stillness around. When he was supposed to be at his studies, not a voice was heard, not a footfall on the stairs. There is no such flattery to your man of scapes and accidents, your thorough adventurer, as that respectful observance that implies he is a person of condition. It is like giving of free will to the highwayman the purse he expected to have a fight for. Davis delighted in these marks of deference, and day by day grew more eager in exacting them.

“I heard some noise outside there this morning, Carl,” said he to the waiter; “what was the meaning of it?” For a moment or two the waiter hesitated to explain; but after a little went on to speak of a stranger who had been a resident of the inn for some months back without ever paying his bill; the law, singularly enough, not giving the landlord the power of turning him adrift, but simply of ceasing to afford him sustenance, and waiting for some opportunity of his leaving the house to forbid his re-entering it. Davis was much amused at this curious piece of legislation, by which a moneyless guest could be starved out but not expelled, and put many questions as to the stranger, his age, appearance, and nation. All the waiter knew was that he was a venerable-looking man, portly, advanced in life, with specious manners, a soft voice, and a benevolent smile; as to his country, he could n’t guess. He spoke several languages, and his German was, though peculiar, good enough to be a native’s.

“But how does he live?” said Davis; “he must eat.”

“There’s the puzzle of it!” exclaimed Carl; “for a while he used to watch while I was serving a breakfast or a dinner, and sallying out of his room, which is at the end of the corridor, he ‘d make off, sometimes with a cutlet, – perhaps a chicken, – now a plate of spinach, now an omelette, till, at last, I never ventured upstairs with the tray without some one to protect it. Not that even this always sufficed, for he was occasionally desperate, and actually seized a dish by force.”

“Even these chances, taken at the best, would scarcely keep a man alive,” said Davis.

“Nor would they; but we suspect he must have means of getting out at night and making a ‘raid’ over the country. We constantly hear of fowls carried off; cheese and fruit stolen. There he is now, creeping along the gallery. Listen! I have left some apples outside.”

With a gesture to enforce caution, Davis arose, and placed a percussion-cap on a pistol, a motion of his hand sufficing to show that the weapon was not loaded.

“Open the door gently,” said he; and the waiter, stealing over noiselessly, turned the handle. Scarcely had the door been drawn back, when Grog saw the figure of a man, and snapped off the pistol. At the same moment he sprang from the spot, and rushed out to the corridor. The stranger, to all seeming, was not even startled by the report, but was gravely occupied in examining his sleeve to see if he had been struck. He lifted up his head, and Davis, with a start, cried out, —

“What, Paul! – Paul Classon! Is this possible!”

“Davis – old fellow! – do I see you here?” exclaimed the other, in a deep and mellow voice, utterly devoid of irritation or even excitement.

“Come in, – come in here, Paul,” said Davis, taking him by the arm; and he led him within the room. “Little I suspected on whom I was playing this scurvy trick.”

“It was not loaded,” said the other, coolly.

“Of course not”

“I thought so,” said he, with an easy smile; “they ‘ve had so many devices to frighten me.”

“Come, Paul, old fellow, pour yourself out a tumbler of that red wine, while I cut you some of this ham; we ‘ll have plenty of time for talk afterwards.”

The stranger accepted the invitation, but without the slightest show of eagerness or haste. Nay, he unfolded his napkin leisurely, and fastened a corner in one buttonhole, as some old-fashioned epicures have a trick of doing. He held his glass, too, up to the light, to enjoy the rich color of the wine, and smacked his lips, as he tasted it, with the air of a connoisseur.

“A Burgundy, Davis, eh?” asked he, sipping again.

“I believe so. In truth, I know little about these wines.”

“Oh, yes, a ‘Pomard,’ and very good of its kind. Too loaded, of course, for the time of year, except for such palates as England rears.”

Davis had now covered his friend’s plate with ham and capon, and, at last, was pleased to see him begin his breakfast.

We are not about to impose upon our reader the burden of knowing more of Mr. Classon than is requisite for the interests of our story; but while he eats the first regular meal he has tasted for two months and more, let us say a word or so about him. He was a clergyman, whose life had been one continued history of mischances. Occasionally the sun of prosperity would seem disposed to shine genially on his head; but for the most part his lot was to walk with dark and lowering skies above him.

If he held any preferment, it was to quarrel with his rector, his dean, or his bishop; to be cited before commissions, tried by surrogates, pronounced contumacious, suspended, and Heaven knows what else. He was everlastingly in litigation with churchwardens and parish authorities, discovering rights of which he was defrauded, and privileges of which he was deprived. None like him to ferret out Acts of Edward or Henry, and obsolete bequests of long-buried founders of this, that, or t’other, of which the present guardians were little better than pickpockets. Adverse decisions and penalties pressing on him, he grew libellous, he spoke, wrote, and published all manner of defamatory things, accused every one of peculation, fraud, and falsehood, and, as the spirit of attack strengthened in him by exercise, menaced this man with prosecution, and that with open exposure. Trials by law, and costs accumulated against him, and he was only out of jail here, to enter it again there. From the Courts “above” he soon descended to those “below;” he became dissipated and dissolute, his hireling pen scrupled at nothing, and he assailed anything or any one, to order. Magistrates “had him up” as the author of threatening letters or begging epistles. To-day he was the mock secretary of an imaginary charity; tomorrow he ‘d appear as a distressed missionary going out to some island in the Pacific. He was eternally before the world, until the paragraph that spoke of him grew to be headed by the words, “The Reverend Paul Classon again!” or, more briefly, “Paul Classon’s last!” His pen, all this while, was his sole subsistence; and what a bold sweep it took! – impeachment of Ministers, accusation of theft, forgery, intimation of even worse crimes against the highest names in the realm, startling announcements of statesmen bribed, ambassadors corrupted, pasquinades against bishops and judges, libellous stories of people in private life, prize fights, prophetic almanacs, mock missionary journals, stanzas to celebrate quack remedies, – even street ballads were amongst his literary efforts; while, personally, he presided at low singing-establishments, and was the president of innumerable societies in localities only known to the police. It was difficult to take up a newspaper without finding him either reported drunk and disorderly in the police-sheet, obstructing the thoroughfare by a crowd assembled to hear him, having refused to pay for his dinner or his bed, assaulted the landlady, or, crime of crimes, used intemperate language to “G 493.” At last they got actually tired of trying him

for begging, and imprisoning him for battery; the law was wearied out; but the world also had its patience exhausted, and Paul saw that he must conquer a new hemisphere. He came abroad.

What a changeable life was it now that he led, – at one time a tutor, at another a commissioner for an hotel, a railway porter, a travelling servant, a police spy, the doorkeeper of a circus company, editor of an English journal, veterinary, language master, agent for patent medicines, picture-dealer, and companion to a nervous invalid, which, as Paul said, meant a furious maniac. There is no telling what he went through of debt and difficulty, till the police actually preferred passing him quietly over the frontier to following up with penalty so incurable an offender. In this way had he wandered about Europe for years, the terror of legations, the pestilence of charitable committees. Contributions to enable the Rev. Paul Classon to redeem his clothes, his watch, his divinity library, to send him to England, to the Andes, to Africa, figured everywhere. I dare not say how often he had been rescued out of the lowest pit of despondency, or snatched like a brand from the burning; in fact, he lived in a pit, and was always on fire.

“I am delighted,” said Davis, as he replenished his friend’s plate, – “I am delighted to see that you have the same good, hearty appetite as of old, Paul.”

“Ay, Kit,” said he, with a gentle sigh, “the appetite has been more faithful than the dinner; on the same principle, perhaps, that the last people who desert us are our creditors!”

“I suspect you ‘ve had rather a hard time of it,” said Davis, compassionately.

“Well, not much to complain of, – not anything that one would call hardships,” said Classon, as he pushed his plate from him and proceeded to light a cigar; “we ‘re all stragglers, Kit, that’s the fact of it.”

“I suppose it is; but it ain’t very disagreeable to be a straggler with ten thousand a year.”

“If the having and enjoying were always centred in the same individual,” said Classon, slowly, “what you say would be unanswerable; but it’s not so, Kit. No, no; the fellows who really enjoy life never have anything. They are, so to say, guests on a visit to this earth, come to pass a few months pleasantly, to put up anywhere, and be content with everything.” Grog shook his head dissentingly, and the other went on, “Who knows the truth of what I am saying better than either of us? How many broad acres did your father or mine bequeath us? What debentures, railroad shares, mining scrip, or mortgages? And yet, Kit, if we come to make up the score of pleasant days and glorious nights, do you fancy that any noble lord of them all would dispute the palm with us? Oh,” said he, rapturously, “give *me* the unearned enjoyments of life, – pleasures that have never cost me a thought to provide, nor a sixpence to pay for! Pass the wine, Kit, – that bottle is better than the other;” and he smacked his lips, while his eyes closed in a sort of dreamy rapture.

“I ‘d like to hear something of your life, Paul,” said Davis. “I often saw your name in the ‘Times’ and the ‘Post,’ but I ‘d like to have your own account of it.”

“My dear Kit, I ‘ve had fifty lives. It’s the man you should understand, – the fellow that is here;” and he slapped his broad chest as he spoke. “As for mere adventures, what are they? Squalls that never interfere with the voyage, – not even worth entering in the ship’s log.”

“Where’s your wife, Paul?” asked Davis, abruptly, for he was half impatient under the aphorizing tone of his companion.

“When last I heard of her,” said Classon, slowly, as he eyed his glass to the light, “she was at Chicago, – if that be the right prosody of it, – lecturing on ‘Woman’s Rights.’ Nobody knew the subject better than Fanny.”

“I heard she was a very clever woman,” said Davis.

“Very clever,” said Classon; “discursive; not always what the French call ‘consequent,’ but, certainly, clever, and a sweet poetess.” There was a racy twinkle in that reverend eye as he said the last words, so full of malicious drollery that Davis could not help remarking it; but all Classon gave for explanation was, “This to her health and happiness!” and he drained off a bumper. “And yours, Kit, – what of her?” asked he.

“Dead these many years. Do you remember her?”

“Of course I do. I wrote the article on her first appearance at the Surrey. What a handsome creature she was then! It was I predicted her great success; it was I that saved her from light comedy parts, and told her to play Lady Teazle!”

“I ‘ll show you her born image to-morrow, – her daughter,” said Davis, with a strange choking sensation that made him cough; “she’s taller than her mother, – more style also.”

“Very difficult, that, – very difficult, indeed,” said Classon, gravely. “There was a native elegance about her I never saw equalled; and then her walk, the carriage of the head, the least gesture, had all a certain grace that was fascination.”

“Wait till you see Lizzy,” said Davis, proudly; “you ‘ll see these all revived.”

“Do you destine her for the boards, Kit?” asked Classon, carelessly.

“For the stage? No, of course not,” replied Davis, rudely.

“And yet these are exactly the requirements would fetch a high price just now. Beauty is not a rare gift in England; nor are form and symmetry; but, except in the highly born, there is a lamentable deficiency in that easy gracefulness of manner, that blended dignity and softness, that form the chief charm of woman. If she be what you say, Kit, – if she be, in short, her mother’s daughter, – it is a downright insanity not to bring her out.”

“I ‘ll not hear of it! That girl has cost me very little short of ten thousand pounds, – ay, ten thousand pounds, – schooling, masters, and the rest of it. She ‘s no fool, so I take it; it ain’t thrown away! As regards beauty, I’ll stake fifteen to ten, in hundreds, that, taking your stand at the foot of St. James’s Street on a drawing-room day, you don’t see her equal. I’m ready to put down the money to-morrow, and that’s giving three to two against the field! And is that the girl I ‘m to throw away on the Haymarket? She’s a Derby filly, I tell you, Paul, and will be first favorite one of these days.”

“Faustum sit augurium!” said Classon, as he raised his glass in a theatrical manner, and then drained it off. “Still, if I be rightly informed, the stage is often the antechamber to the peerage. The attractions that dazzle thousands form the centre of fascination for some one.”

“She may find her way to a coronet without that,” said Davis, rudely.

“Ah, indeed!” said Paul, with a slight elevation of the eyebrow; but though his tone invited a confidence, the other made no further advance’s.

“And now for yourself, Classon, what have you been at lately?” said Davis, wishing to change the subject.

“Literature and the arts. I have been contributing to a London weekly, as Crimean correspondent, with occasional letters from the gold diggings. I have been painting portraits for a florin the head, till I have exhausted all the celebrities of the three villages near us. My editor has, I believe, run away, however, and supplies have ceased for some time back.”

“And what are your plans now?”

“I have some thoughts of going back to divinity. These newly invented water-cure establishments are daily developing grander proportions; some have got German bands, some donkeys, some pleasure-boats, others rely upon lending libraries and laboratories; but the latest dodge is a chaplain.”

“But won’t they know you, Paul? Have not the newspapers ‘blown you’?”

“Ah, Davis, my dear friend,” said he, with a benevolent smile, “it’s far easier to live down a bad reputation than to live up to a good one. I ‘d only ask a week – one week’s domestication with the company of these places – to show I was a martyred saint. I have, so to say, a perennial fount of goodness in my nature that has never failed me.”

“I remember it at school,” said Davis, dryly.

“*You* took the clever line, Kit, ‘suum cuique;’ it would never have suited *me*. *You* were born to thrive upon men’s weaknesses, mine the part to have a vested interest in their virtues.”

“If you depend upon their virtues for a subsistence, I ‘m not surprised to see you out at elbows,” said Davis, roughly.

“Not so, Kit, – not so,” said the other, blandly, in rebuke. “There ‘s a great deal of weak good-nature always floating about life. The world is full of fellows with ‘Pray take me in’ written upon them.”

“I can only vouch for it very few have come in my way,” said Davis, with a harsh laugh.

“So much the better for *them*,” said Paul, gravely.

A pause of considerable duration now ensued between them, broken, at last, by Davis abruptly saying, “Is it not a strange thing, it was only last night I was saying to myself, ‘What the deuce has become of Holy Paul? – the newspapers have seemingly forgotten him. It can’t be that he is dead.’”

“Lazarus only sleepeth,” said Classon; “and, indeed, my last eleven weeks here seem little other than a disturbed sleep.”

Continuing his own train of thought, Davis went on, “If I could chance upon him now, he’s just the fellow I want, or, rather, that I may want.”

“If it is a lampoon or a satire you ‘re thinking of, Kit, I ‘ve given them up; I make no more blistering ointments, but turn all my skill to balsams. They give no trouble in compounding, and pay even better. Ah, Davis, my worthy friend, what a mistake it is to suppose that a man must live by his talents, while his real resource is his temperament. For a life of easy enjoyment, that blessed indolence that never knew a care, it is heart, not head, is needed.”

“All I can say is, that with the fellows I ‘ve been most with, heart had very little to do with them, and the best head was the one that least trusted his neighbors.”

“A narrow view, my dear friend, – a narrow view, take my word for it; as one goes on in life he thinks better of it.”

A malicious grin was all the answer Davis made to this remark. At last he turned his eyes full upon the other, and in a low but distinct voice said: “Let us have no more of this, Paul. If we are to play, let us play, as the Yankees say, without the ‘items,’ – no cheating on either side. Don’t try the Grand Benevolence dodge with me, – don’t. When I said awhile ago, I might want you, it was no more than I meant. You *may* be able to render me a service, – a great service.”

“Say how,” said Classon, drawing his chair nearer to him, – “say how, Kit, and you’ll not find the terms exorbitant.”

“It’s time enough to talk about the stakes when we are sure the match will come off,” said Davis, cautiously. “All I ‘ll say for the present is, I may want you.”

Classon took out a small and very greasy-looking notebook from his waistcoat-pocket, and with his pencil in hand, said, “About what time are you likely to need me? Don’t be particular as to a day or a week, but just in a rough-guessing sort of way say when.”

“I should say in less than a month from this time, – perhaps within a fortnight.”

“All right,” said Classon, closing his book, after making a brief note. “You smile,” said he, blandly, “at my methodical habits, but I have been a red-tapist all my life, Kit I don’t suppose you ‘ll find any man’s papers, letters, documents, and so forth, in such trim order as mine, – all labelled, dated, and indexed. Ah! there is a great philosophy in this practical equanimity; take my word for it, there is.”

“How far are we from Neuwied here?” asked Davis, half pettishly; for every pretension of his reverend friend seemed to jar upon his nerves.

“About sixteen or eighteen miles, I should say?”

“I must go or send over there to-morrow,” continued Davis. “The postmaster sends me word that several letters have arrived, – some to my address, some to my care. Could you manage to drive across?”

“Willingly; only remember that once I leave this blessed sanctuary I may find the door closed against my return. They ‘ve a strange legislation here – ”

“I know – I ‘ve heard of it,” broke in Davis. “I ‘ll guarantee everything, so that you need have no fears on that score. Start at daybreak, and fetch back all letters you find there for me or for the Honorable Annesley Beecher.”

“The Honorable Annesley Beecher!” said Classon, as he wrote the name in his note-book. “Dear me! the last time I heard that name was – let me see – fully twelve years ago. It was after that affair at Brighton. I wrote an article for the ‘Heart of Oak,’ on the ‘Morality of our Aristocracy.’ How I lashed their vices! how I stigmatized their lives of profligacy and crime!”

“You infernal old hypocrite!” cried Davis, with a half-angry laugh.

“There was no hypocrisy in that, Kit. If I tell you that a statue is bad in drawing, or incorrect in anatomy, I never assert thereby that I myself have the torso of Hercules or the limbs of Antinous.”

“Leave people’s vices alone, then; they ‘re the same as their debts; if you’re not going to pay them, you ‘ve no right to talk about them.”

“Only on public grounds, Kit Our duty to society, my dear friend, has its own requirements!”

“Fiddlestick!” said Davis, angrily, as he pushed his glass from before him; then, after a moment, went on: “Do you start early, so as to be back here before evening, – my mind is running on it. There’s three naps,” said he, placing the gold pieces on the table. “You’ll not want more.”

“Strange magnetism is the touch of gold to one’s palm,” said Classon, as he surveyed the money in the hollow of his hand. “How marvellous that these bits of stamped metal should appeal so forcibly to my inner consciousness!”

“Don’t get drunk with them, that’s all,” said Davis, with a stern savagery of manner, as he arose from his seat. “There’s my passport, – you may have to show it at the office. And now, good-bye, for I have a long letter to write to my daughter.”

Classon poured the last of the Burgundy into a tumbler, and drank it off, and hiccuping out, “I’ll haste me to the Capitol!” left the room.

CHAPTER VI. IMMINENT TIDINGS

It was a very wearisome day to Davis as he waited for the return of Paul Classon. Grog's was not a mind made for small suspicions or petty distrusts, – he was a wholesale dealer in iniquity, and despised minute rogueries; yet he was not altogether devoid of anxiety as hour, by hour went over, and no sign of Classon. He tried to pass the time in his usual mode. He shot with the pistol, he fenced, he whipped the trout-stream, he went over his “martingale” with the cards, but somehow everything went amiss with him. He only hit the bull's-eye once in three shots; he fenced wide; a pike carried off his tackle; and, worst of all, he detected a flaw in the great “Cabal,” that, if not remediable, must render it valueless.

“A genuine Friday, this!” muttered he, as he sauntered up a little eminence, from which a view might be had of the road for above a mile. “And what nonsense it is people saying they 're not superstitions! I suppose I have as little of that kind of humbug about me as my neighbors; yet I would n't play half-crowns at blind-hookey today. I'd not take the favorite even against a chance horse. I'd not back myself to leap that drain yonder; and why? Just because I 'm in what the French call *guignon*. There's no other word for it that ever I heard. These are the days Fortune says to a man, ‘Shut up, and don't book a bet!’ It's a wise fellow takes the warning. I know it so well that I always prepare for a run against me, and as sure as I am here, I feel that something or other is going wrong elsewhere. Not a sign of him, – not a sign!” said he, with a heavy sigh, as he gazed long and earnestly along the line of road. “He has n't bolted, that I'm sure of; he'd not 'try that on' with *me*. He remembers to this very hour a licking I gave him at school. I know what it is, he's snug in a wine ‘Schenke.’ He's in for a big drink, the old beast, as if he could n't get blind drunk when he came home. I think I see him holding forth to the boors, and telling them what an honor it is to them to sit in his company; that he took a high class at Oxford, and was all but Bishop of – Eh, is that he? No, it 's going t' other way. Confounded fool! – but worse fool myself for trusting him. That's exactly what people would say: ‘He gave Holy Paul three naps, and expected to see him come back sober!’ Well, so I did; and just answer me this: Is not all the work of this world done by rogues and vagabonds? It suits them to be honest for a while; they ride to order so long as they like the stable. Not a sign of him!” And with a comfortless sigh he turned back to the house.

“I wish I knew how Lizzy was to-night!” muttered he, as he rested his head on his hand, and sat gazing at her picture. “Ay, that is your own saucy smile, but the world will take that out of you, and put a puckered-up mouth and hard lines in its place, that it will, confound it! And those eyes will have another kind of brightness in them, too, when they begin to read life glibly. My poor darling, I wish you could stay as you are. Where are you now, I wonder? Not thinking of old Kit, I 'm certain! And yet, maybe, I wrong her, – maybe she is just dwelling on long – long ago – home, and the rest of it. Ay, darling, that's what the lucky ones have in life, and never so much as know their luck in having it. By Jove! she is handsome!” cried he, as he held up the miniature in ecstasy before him. “‘If she's so beautiful, Mr. Ross, why don't she come to the Drawing-room?’ say the Court people. Ay, you'll see her there yet, or I'm not Kit Davis! Don't be impatient, ladies; make your running while the course is your own, for there's a clipper coming. I'd like to see where they'll be when Lizzy takes the field.”

And now, in his pride, he walked the room, with head erect and arms folded. It was only for a very short space, however, that these illusions withdrew him from his gloomier reveries; for, with a start, he suddenly recurred to all the anxieties of the morning, and once more issued forth upon the high-road to look out for Classon. The setting sun sent a long golden stream of light down the road, on which not a living thing was to be seen. Muttering what were scarcely blessings on the head of his messenger, he strolled listlessly along. Few men could calculate the eventualities of life better or quicker than Davis. Give him the man and the opportunities, and he would speedily tell you what would be the upshot. He knew thoroughly well how far experience and temperament mould the daring

spirit, and how the caution that comes of education tames down the wild influences suggested by temptation.

“No,” said he to himself, “though he had my passport and three Napoleons besides, he has not levanted. He is far too deep a fellow for that.”

At last a low rumbling sound came up from the distance; he stopped and listened. It came and went at intervals, till, at last, he could distinctly mark the noise of wheels, and the voice of a man urging on his horse. Davis quickened his pace, till, in the gray half-light, he descried a little one-horse carriage slowly advancing towards him. He could only see one man in it; but as it came nearer, he saw a heap of clothes, surmounted by what indicated the presence of another in the bottom of the conveyance, and Grog quickly read the incident by the aid of his own anticipation. There, indeed, lay Paul Classon, forgetful of the world and all its cares, his outstretched arm almost touching the wheel, and the heavy wooden shoe of the peasant grazing his face.

“Has he got the letters? Where are they?” cried Davis, eagerly, to the driver.

“They’re in his hat”

Grog snatched it rudely from his head, and found several letters of various sizes and shapes, and with what, even in that dim light, seemed a variety of addresses and superscriptions.

“Are you certain none have fallen out or been lost on the road?” said Davis, as he reckoned them over.

“That I am,” said the man; “for at every jolt of the wagon he used to grip his hat and hold it fast, as if it was for very life, till we came to the last village. It was there he finished off with a flask of Laubthaler that completely overcame him.”

“So, then, he was sober on leaving Neuwied?”

“He was in the so-called ‘bemuzzed’ state!” said the man, with a half-apologetic air.

“Take him down to the inn; throw him into the hay-yard – or the river, if you like,” said Davis, contemptuously, and turned away.

Once in his own room, the candles lighted, the door locked, Davis sat down to the table on which the letters were thrown. Leisurely he took them up one by one and examined their superscriptions.

“Little news in these,” said he, throwing three or four to one side; “the old story, – money-seeking.” And he mumbled out, “Your acceptance being duly presented this day at Messrs. Haggitts and Drudge’s, and no provision being made for payment of the same – ’ It’s like the burden of an old song in one’s ears. Who is this from? Oh, Billy Peach, with some Doncaster news. I do wonder will the day ever come that will bring me good tidings by the post; I ‘ve paid many a pound in my life for letters, and I never yet chanced upon one that told me my uncle Peter had just died, leaving me all his estates in Jamaica, or that my aunt Susan bequeathed to me all her Mexican stock and the shares in four tin-mines. This is also from Peach, and marked ‘Immediate;’” and he broke it open. It contained only these lines: “Dark is the word for a week or two still. On Tuesday your name will appear amongst the passengers for New York by the ‘Persia.’ Saucy Sal is a dead break-down, and we net seven hundred safe; Pot did it with a knitting-needle while they were plaiting her. What am I to do about the jewels?”

Davis’s brow darkened as he crushed the paper in his hand, while he muttered, “I wish these infernal fools had not been taught to write! He ought to know that addressing me Captain Christopher never deceived a ‘Detective’ yet. And this is for the Honorable Annesley Beecher,” said he, reading aloud the address, “‘care of Captain Christopher, Coblentz – try Bingen – try Neuwied.’ A responsible-looking document this; it looks like a despatch, with its blue-post paper and massive seal; and what is the name here, in the corner? ‘Davenport Dunn,’ sure enough, – ‘Davenport Dunn.’ And with your leave, sir, we ‘ll see what you have to say,” muttered he, as he broke the seal of the packet. A very brief note first met his eyes; it ran thus: —

“Dear Sir, – While I was just reading a very alarming account of Lord Lackington’s illness in a communication from Messrs.

Harmer and Gore, the post brought me the enclosed letter for yourself, which I perceive to be in her Ladyship's hand; I forward it at once to Brussels, in the hope that it may reach you there. Should her Ladyship's tidings be better than I can fain persuade myself to hope, may I presume to suggest that you should lose no time in repairing to Italy.

I cannot exaggerate the peril of his Lordship's state; in fact, I am hourly expecting news of his death; and, the *peculiar circumstances* of the case considered, it is highly important you should possess yourself of every information the exigencies of the event may require. I beg to enclose you a bank post-bill for two-hundred pounds, payable at any banker's on your signature, and have the honor to be, with sincere respect,

“Your humble Servant,

“Davenport Dunn.

“P. S. – I have reason to know that certain claims are now under consideration, and will be preferred ere long, if suitable measures be not adopted to restrain them.”

“From which side do you hold your brief, Master Davenport Dunn? I should like to know *that!*” said Davis, as he twice over read aloud this postscript. He looked at Lady Lackington's letter, turned it over, examined the seal and the postmark, and seemed to hesitate about breaking it open. Was it that some scruple of conscience arrested his hand, and some mysterious feeling that it was a sisterly confidence he was about to violate? Who knows! At all events, if there was a struggle it was a brief one, for he now smashed the seal and spread the open letter before him.

With a muttered expression of impatience did he glance over the four closely written pages indited in the very minutest of hands and the faintest possible ink. Like one addressing himself, however, to a severe task, he set steadily to work, and for nigh an hour never rose from the table. We have no right, as little have we the wish, to inflict upon our reader any portion of the labor this process of deciphering cost Davis, so that we will briefly state what formed the substance of the epistle. The letter was evidently begun before Lord Lackington had been taken ill, for it opened with an account of Como and the company at the Villa d'Este, where they had gone to resume the water-cure. Her Ladyship's strictures upon the visitors, their morals, and their manners, were pleasantly and flippantly thrown off. She possessed what would really seem an especial gift of her class, – the most marvellous use of the perceptive faculties, – and could read not alone rank and condition, but character and individuality, by traits of breeding and manner that would have escaped the notice of hundreds of those the world calls shrewd observers. This fragment, for it was such, was followed, after a fortnight, by a hastily written passage, announcing that Lord Lackington had been seized with an attack resembling apoplexy, and for several hours remained in great danger. She had detained the letter to give the latest tidings before the post closed, and ultimately decided on not despatching it till the next day. The following morning's communication was a minute account of medical treatment, the bleedings, the blisterings, the watchings, and the anxieties of a sick-bed, with all the vacillating changes that mark the course of malady, concluding with these words: “The doctors are not without hopes, but confess that their confidence is rather based on the great strength and energy of his constitution than upon any success that has attended their treatment, from which I may say that up to this no benefit has accrued. So well as I can interpret his utterance, he seems very anxious to see you, and made an effort to write something to you, which, of course, he could not accomplish. Come out here, therefore, as quickly as possible; the route by Lucerne is, they tell me, the shortest and speediest. If I were to give my own opinion, it would be that he is better and stronger than yesterday; but I do not perceive the doctors disposed to take this view.” After this came a lengthened statement of medical hopes and fears, balanced with all the subtle minuteness known to “the Faculty.” They explained to a nicety how if that poor watch were to stop it could not possibly be from any fault of theirs, but either from some vice in its original construction, or some organic change occasioned by

time. They demonstrated, in fact, that great as was their art, it was occasionally baffled; but pointed with a proud humility to the onward progress of science, in the calm assurance that, doubtless, we should one day know all these things, and treat them as successfully as we now do – I am afraid to say what. One thing, however, was sufficiently clear, – Lord Lackington’s case was as bad as possible, his recovery almost hopeless. On the turn-down of the last page was the following, written in evident haste, if not agitation: “In opening the letters which have arrived since his illness, I am astonished to find many referring to some suit, either meditated or actually instituted, against our right to the title. Surely some deep game of treachery is at work here. He never once alluded to such a possibility to myself, nor had I the slightest suspicion that any pretended claim existed. One of these letters is from Mr. Davenport Dunn, who has, I can see from the tone in which he writes, been long conversant with the transaction, and as evidently inclines to give it a real or feigned importance. Indeed, he refers to a ‘compromise’ of some sort or other, and strongly impresses the necessity of not letting the affair proceed further. I am actually distracted by such news coming at such a moment. Surely Lackington could never have been weak enough to yield to mere menace, and have thus encouraged the insolent pretensions of this claim? As you pass through London, call at Fordyce’s, somewhere in Furnival’s Inn, and, just in course of conversation, showing your acquaintance with the subject, learn all you can on the matter. Fordyce has all our papers, and must necessarily know what weight is due to these pretensions. Above all, however, hasten out here; there is no saying what any day – any hour – may produce. I have no one here to give me a word of advice, or even consolation; for, though Lady Grace is with us, she is so wrapped up in her new theological studies – coquetting with Rome as she has been all the summer – that she is perfectly useless.

“Have you any idea who is Terence Driscoll? Some extraordinary notes bearing this signature, ill-written and ill-spelt, have fallen into my hands as I rummaged amongst the papers, and they are all full of this claim. It is but too plain Lackington suffered these people to terrify him, and this Driscoll’s tone is a mixture of the meanest subserviency and outrageous impertinence. It is not unlikely Fordyce may know him. Of course, I need not add one word of caution against your mention of this affair, even to those of your friends with whom you are in closest intimacy. It is really essential not a hint of it should get abroad.

“I have little doubt, now, looking back on the past, that anxiety and care about this matter have had a large share in bringing on Lackington’s attack. He had been sleepless and uneasy for some time back, showing an eagerness, too, about his letters, and the greatest impatience if any accident delayed the post. Although all my maturer thoughts – indeed, my convictions – reject attaching any importance to this claim, I will not attempt to conceal from you how unhappy it has made me, nor how severely it has affected my nerves.”

With one more urgent appeal to lose not an hour in hastening over the Alps, the letter concluded; the single word “weaker,” apparently written after the letter was sealed, giving a deep meaning to the whole.

Davis was not satisfied with one perusal of the latter portion of this letter, but read it over carefully a second time; after which, taking a sheet of paper, he wrote down the names of Fordyce and Terence Driscoll. He then opened a Directory, and running his eye down a column, came to “Fordyce and Fraude, 7 Furnivats Inn, solicitors.” Of Terence Driscolls there were seventeen, but all in trade, – tanners, tinmen, last-makers, wharfingers, and so on; not one upon whom Davis could fix the likelihood of the correspondence with the Viscount. He then walked the room, cigar in mouth, for about an hour, after which he sat down and wrote the note to Beecher which we have given in a former chapter, with directions to call upon Stein, the moneylender, and then hasten away from Aix as speedily as possible. This finished, he addressed another and somewhat longer epistle to Lazarus Stein himself, of which latter document this true history has no record.

We, perhaps, owe an apology to our reader for inverting in our narrative the actual order of these events. It might possibly have been more natural to have preceded the account of Beecher’s

reception of the letter by the circumstances we have just detailed. We selected the present course, however, to avoid the necessity of that continual change of scene, alike wearisome to him who reads as to him who writes; and as we are about to sojourn in Mr. Davis's company for some time to come, we have deferred the explanation to a time when it should form part of a regular series of events. Nor are we sorry at the opportunity of asking the reader to turn once again to that brief note, and mark its contents. Though Davis was fully impressed with the conviction that Lord Lackington's days were numbered; though he felt that, at any moment, some chance rumor, some flying report might inform Beecher what great change was about to come over his fortunes, – yet this note is written in all the seeming carelessness of a gossiping humor: he gives the latest news of the turf, he alludes to Beecher's new entanglements at home, to, his own newly discovered martingale for the play-table, trusting to the one line about "Benson's people" to make Beecher hasten away from Aix, and from the chance of hearing that his brother was hopelessly ill. While Grog penned these lines, he would have given – if he had it – ten thousand pounds that Beecher was beside him. Ay, willingly had he given it, and more, too, that Beecher might be where no voice could whisper to him the marvellous change that any moment might cause in his destiny. Oh, ye naturalists, who grow poetical over the grub and the butterfly, what is there, I ask ye, in the transformation at all comparable with that when the younger brother, the man of strait and small fortune, springs into the peer, exchanging a life of daily vicissitudes, cheap dinners and duns, dubious companionships and high discounts, for the assured existence, the stately banquets, the proud friendships, the pomp and circumstance of a lord? In a moment he soars out of the troubled atmosphere of debts and disabilities, and floats into the balmy region whose very sorrows never wear an unbecoming mourning.

Grog's note was thus a small specimen of what the great Talleyrand used to call the perfection of despatch writing, "not the best thing that could be said on the subject, but simply that which would produce the effect you desired." Having sent off this to Beecher, he then telegraphed to his man of business, Mr. Peach, to ascertain at Fordyce's the latest accounts of Lord Lackington's health, and answer "by wire."

It was far into the night when Davis betook himself to bed, but not to sleep. The complications of the great game he was playing had for him all the interest of the play-table. The kind of excitement he gloried in was to find himself pitted against others, – wily, subtle, and deep-scheming as himself, – to see some great stake on the board, and to feel that it must be the prize of the best player. With the gambler's superstition, he kept constantly combining events with dates and eras, recalling what of good or ill-luck had marked certain periods of his life. He asked himself if September had usually been a fortunate month; did the 20th imply anything; what influence might Holy Paul exert over his destiny; was he merely unlucky himself, or did he bring evil fortune upon others? If he suffered himself to dwell upon such "vain auguries" as these, they still exerted little other sway over his mind than to nerve it to greater efforts; in fact, he consulted these signs as a physician might investigate certain symptoms which, if not of moment enough to call for special treatment, were yet indicative of hidden mischief.

His gambling experiences had given him the ready tact, by a mere glance around the table, to recognize those with whom the real struggle should be waged; to detect, in a second, the deep head, the crafty intelligence, that marvellous blending of caution with rashness that make the gamester; and in the same spirit be now turned over in thought each of those with whom he was now about to contend, and muttered the name of Davenport Dunn over and over. "Could we only 'hit it off' together, what a game might we not play!" was his last reflection ere he fell off to sleep.

CHAPTER VII. A DISCURSIVE CONVERSATION

Davis was surprised, and something more, as he entered the breakfast-room the next morning to find the Rev. Paul Classon already seated at the table, calmly arranging certain little parallelograms of bread-and-butter and sardines. No signs of discomfiture or shame showed themselves in that calmly benevolent countenance. Indeed, as he arose and extended his hand there was an air of bland protection in the gesture perfectly soothing.

“You came back in a pretty state last night,” said Davis, roughly.

“Overtaken, Kit, – overtaken. It was a piece of good news rather than the grape juice did the mischief. As the poet says, —

“‘Good tidings flowed upon his heart
Like a sea o’er a barren shore,
And the pleasant waves refreshed the spot
So parched and bleak before.’”

“The fact is, Kit, you brought me luck. Just as I reached the Post-Office, I saw a letter addressed to the Rev. Paul Classon, announcing that I had been accepted as Chaplain to the great Hydropathic Institution at Como! and, to commemorate the event, I celebrated in wine the triumphs of water! You got the letters all safely?”

“Little thanks to you if I did; nor am I yet certain how many may have dropped out on the road.”

“Stay, – I have a memorandum here,” said Paul, opening his little note-book. “Four, with London post-marks, to Captain Christopher; two from Brussels for the same; a large packet for the Hon. Annesley Beecher. That’s the whole list.”

“I got these!” said Grog, gruffly; “but why, might I ask, could you not have kept sober till you got back here?”

“He who dashes his enthusiasm with caution, waters the liquor of life. How do we soar above the common ills of existence save by yielding to those glorious impulses of the heart, which say, ‘Be happy!’”

“Keep the sermon for the cripples at the water-cure,” said Davis, savagely. “When are you to be there?”

“By the end of the month. I mentioned the time myself. It would be as soon, I thought, as I could manage to have my divinity library out from England.”

The sly drollery of his eye, as he spoke, almost extorted a half-smile from Davis.

“Let me see,” muttered Grog, as he arose and lighted his cigar, “we are, to-day, the 21st, I believe. No, you can’t be there so early. I shall need you somewhere about the first week in October; it might chance to be earlier. You mustn’t remain here, however, in the interval. You’ll have to find some place in the neighborhood, about fifteen or twenty miles off.”

“There’s Höchst, on the Lahn, a pleasant spot, eighteen miles from this.”

“Höchst be it; but, mark me, no more of last night’s doings.”

“I pledge my word,” said Paul, solemnly. “Need I say, it is as good as my bond?”

“About the same, I suspect; but I ‘ll give you *mine* too,” said Davis, with a fierce energy. “If by any low dissipation or indiscretion of yours you thwart the plans I am engaged in, I ‘ll leave you to starve out the rest of your life here.”

“So swear we all as liegemen true, So swear to live and die!” cried out Paul, with a most theatrical air in voice and gesture.

“You know a little of everything, I fancy,” said Davis, in a more good-humored tone. “What do you know of law?”

“Of law?” said Paul, as he helped himself to a dish of smoking cutlets, – “if it be the law of debtor and creditor, false arrest, forcible possession, battery, or fraudulent bankruptcy, I am indifferently well skilled. Nor am I ignorant in divorce cases, separate maintenance, and right of guardianship. Equity, I should say, is my weak point.”

“I believe you,” said Davis, with a grin, for he but imperfectly understood the speech. “But it is of another kind of law I ‘m speaking. What do you know about disputed title to a peerage? Have you any experience in such cases?”

“Yes; I have ransacked registries, rummaged out gravestones in my time. I very nearly burned my fingers, too, with a baptismal certificate that turned out to be – what shall I call it? – unauthentic!”

“You forged it!” said Grog, gruffly.

“They disputed its correctness, and, possibly, with some grounds for their opinion. Indeed,” added he, carelessly, “it was the first thing of the kind I had ever done, and it was slovenly – slovenly.”

“It would have been transportation!” said Davis, gravely.

“With hard labor,” added Classon, sipping his tea.

“At all events, you understand something of these sort of cases?”

“Yes; I have been concerned, one way or another, with five. They are interesting when you take to them; there are so many, so to say, surprises; always something turning up you never looked for, – somebody’s father that never had a child, somebody’s mother that never was married. Then people die, – say a hundred and fifty years ago, – and no proof of the death can be made out; or you build wonderfully upon an act of Parliament, and only find out at the last hour that it has been repealed. These traits give a great deal of excitement to the suit. I used to enjoy them much when I was younger.” And Mr. Classon sighed as if he had been calling up memories of cricket-matches, steeple-chases, or the polka, – pleasures that advancing years had rudely robbed him of.

Davis sat deep in thought for some time. Either he had not fully made up his mind to open an unreserved confidence with his reverend friend, or which is perhaps as likely, he was not in possession of such knowledge as might enable him to state his case.

“These suits, or actions, or whatever you call them,” said he, at length, “always drag on for years, – don’t they?”

“Of course they do; the lawyers take care of that. There are trials at bar, commissions, special examinations before the Masters, arguments before the peers, appeals against decisions; in fact, it is a question of the purse of the litigants. Like everything else, however, in this world, they ‘ve got economy-struck. I remember the time – it was the Bancroft case – they gave me five guineas a day and travelling expenses to go out to Ravenna and take the deposition of an old Marchess, half-sister of the Dowager, and now, I suppose, they ‘d say the service was well paid with one half. Indeed, I may say I had as good as accepted a sort of engagement to go out to the Crimea and examine a young fellow whom they fancy has a claim to a peerage, and for a mere trifle, – fifteen shillings a day and expenses. But they had got my passport stopped here, and I could n’t get away.”

“What was the name of the claimant?”

“Here it is,” said he, opening his note-book. “Charles Conway, formerly in the 11th Hussars, supposed to be serving as orderly on the staff of General La Marmora. I have a long letter of instructions Froode forwarded me, and I suspect it is a strong case got up to intimidate.”

“What is the peerage sought for?” asked Davis, with an assumed indifference.

“I can tell you in five minutes if you have any curiosity on the subject,” said Paul, rising. “The papers are all in my writing-desk.”

“Fetch them,” said Davis, as he walked to the window and looked out.

Classon soon re-entered the room with a large open letter in his hand.

“There’s the map of the country!” said he, throwing it down on the table. “What would you call the fair odds in such a case, Kit, – a private soldier’s chance of a peerage that has been undisturbed since Edward the Third?”

“About ten thousand to one, I ‘d call it.”

“I agree with you, particularly since Froode is in it. He only takes up these cases to make a compromise. They ‘re always ‘settled.’ He’s a wonderful fellow to sink the chambers and charge the mine, but he never explodes, – never!”

“So that Froode can always be squared, eh?” asked Davis.

“Always.” Classon now ran his eyes over the letter, and, mumbling the lines half aloud, said, “In which case the Conways of Abergeldy, deriving from the second son, would take precedence of the Beecher branch.’ The case is this,” added he, aloud: “Viscompt Lackington’s peerage was united to the estates by an act of Edward; a motion for a repeal of this was made in Elizabeth’s time, and lost – some aver the reverse; now the claimant, Conway, relies upon the original act, since in pursuit of the estates he invalidates the title. It’s a case to extort money, and a good round sum too. I ‘d say Lord Lack-ington might give twenty thousand to have all papers and documents of the claim surrendered into his hands.”

“A heavy sum, twenty thousand,” muttered Davis, slowly.

“So it is, Kit; but when you come to tot up suits at Nisi Prius, suits in Equity, searches at the Herald’s office, and hearings before the Lords, you ‘ll see it is a downright saving.”

“But could Lackington afford this? What is he worth?”

“They call the English property twelve thousand a year, and he has a small estate in Ireland besides. In fact, it is out of that part of the property the mischief has come. This Conway’s claim was discovered in some old country-house there, and Froode is only partially instructed in it.”

“And now, Paul,” said Davis, slowly, “if you got a commission to square this here affair and make all comfortable, how would you go about it?”

“Acting for which party, do you mean?” asked Paul.

“I mean for the Lackingtons.”

“Well, there are two ways. I ‘d send for Froode, and say, ‘What’s the lowest figure for the whole?’ or I’d despatch a trusty fellow to the Crimea to watch Conway, and see what approaches they are making to him. Of course they’ll send a man out there, and it ought n’t to be hard to get hold of him, or, if not himself, of all his papers and instructions.”

“That looks business-like,” said Grog, encouragingly.

“After all, Kit, these things, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, are only snaps of the percussion-cap. There ‘s scarcely a peerage in England is not menaced with an attempt of the kind; but such is the intermarriage – such the close tie of affinity between them – they stand manfully to the fellow in possession. They know in their hearts, if once they let the world begin to pick out a stone here or there, the whole wall may come tumbling down, and so they say, ‘Here ‘s one of us since Henry II.’s time going to be displaced for some upstart fellow none of us ever heard of.’ What signifies legitimacy that dates seven centuries back, in favor of one probably a shoemaker or a house-painter? They won’t stand that, Kit, and reasonably enough, too. I suppose you’ve heard all about this case from Beecher?”

“Well, I *have* heard something about it,” said Grog, in confusion, for the suddenness of the question disconcerted him; “but *he* don’t care about it.”

“Very likely not. If Lackington were to have a son, it would n’t concern him much.”

“Not alone that, but he does n’t attach any importance to the claim; he says it’s all got up to extort money.”

“What of that? When a highwayman stops you with the same errand, does n’t the refusal occasionally provoke him to use force? I know very few things so hard to deal with as menaces to extort money. Life is, after all, very like the game the Americans call ‘Poker,’ where the grand secret is, never to ‘brag’ too far on a bad hand. What was *your* part in this business, Kit?” asked he, after a brief silence.

“How do you mean by *my* part?” rejoined Davis, gruffly.

“I mean, how were you interested? Do you hold any of Lackington’s paper? – have you got any claims on the reversion? – in a word, does it in any way concern you which king reigns in Israel?”

“It might, or it might not,” said Grog, dryly. “Now for a question to *you*. Could you manage to get employed in the affair, – to be sent out after this Conway, – or is it too late?”

“It might, or it might not,” said Classon, with a significant imitation of the other’s tone and manner. Davis understood the sarcasm in a moment, and in a voice of some irritation said, —

“Don’t you try to come the whip-hand over me, Holy Paul. If there be anything to do in this matter, it is I, and not *you*, will be paymaster; so much for this, so much for that, – there’s the terms!”

“It is such dealings I like best,” said Classon, blandly “Men would have benefited largely in this world had probity been parcelled out as task-work instead of being made daily labor.”

“I suspect that neither you nor I would have had much employment either way,” said Davis, with a bitter laugh. “But come, you must be stirring. You ‘ll have to be off out of this before the afternoon. The Rhine steamer touches at Neuwied at three, and I expect my daughter by this boat. I don’t want her to see you just yet awhile, Paul. You ‘ll start for Höchst, put up at the inn there, and communicate with me at once, so that I may be able to reckon upon you when needed. It were as well, too, that you’d write a line to Froode, and say that on second thoughts that expedition to the Crimea might suit; explore the way, in fact, and let me know the tidings. As to terms,” said Grog, – for the other’s blank look expressed hesitation, – “if *I* say, ‘Go,’ *you* shall say ‘For what?’”

“I do love these frank and open dealings,” said Paul, warmly.

“Look here!” said Davis, as the other was about to leave the room; “old Joe Morris, of Mincing Lane, made his fortune by buying up all the forged bills of exchange he could lay hands on, well knowing that the fellows he could hang or transport any day would be trusty allies. Now, I have all my life committed every critical thing to somebody or other that no other living man would trust with a sixpence. They stood to *me* as I stood to *them*, and they knew why. Need I tell you that why?”

“No necessity in the world to do so,” said Paul, blandly.

“That ‘s enough,” said Davis. “Come to me when you’re ready, and I’ll have some cash for you.”

CHAPTER VIII. A FAMILY MEETING

Along a road pleasantly shaded by linden-trees, Davis strolled leisurely that afternoon to meet his daughter. It was a mellow autumnal day, – calm, silent, and half sombre, – one of those days in which the tranquil aspect of nature has an influence of sad but soothing import, and even the least meditative minds are led to reflection. Down the deep valley, where the clear trout-stream eddied along, while the leafy chestnut-trees threw their shadows over the water; over the rich pasture-lands, where the spotted cattle roamed; high up the blue mountains, whose snowy summits mingled with the clouds, – Davis wandered with his eyes, and felt, he knew not why or how, a something of calming, subduing effect upon a brain racked with many a scheme, wearied with many a plot.

As he gazed down upon that fair scene where form and color and odor were blended into one beautiful whole, a struggling effort of fancy sent through his mind the question, “Is this, after all, the real prize of life? Is this peaceful existence worth all the triumphs that we strive and fight for?” And then came the thought, “Could this be lasting, what would a nature like mine become, thus left in rust and disuse? Could I live? or should I enjoy life without that eternal hand-to-hand conflict with my fellow-men, on which skill and ready wit are exercised?” He pondered long over this notion, nor could he satisfy himself with any conclusion.

He thought he could remember a time when he would thoroughly have liked all this, – when he could have taken leave of the busy world without one regret, and made the great race of life a mere “walk over;” but now that he had tasted the poisonous fascination of that combat, where man is pitted against man, and where even the lust of gain is less stimulating than a deadly sense of jealous rivalry, it was too late – too late! How strange, too, did it seem to him, as he looked back upon his wild and stormy life, with all its perils and all its vicissitudes, to think that an existence so calm, so uneventful, and so safe, could yet be had, – that a region existed where craft could find no exercise, where subtlety might be in disuse! It was to him like a haven that he was rejoiced to know, – a harbor whose refuge, some one day or other, he would search out; but there was yet one voyage to make, – one grand venture, – which, if successful, would be the crowning fortune of his life!

The sharp crack, crack of a postilion’s whip started him from his musings, and, looking up, he saw a post-carriage approaching at full speed. He waved his hat as the carriage came near for the men to draw up, and the next moment Lizzy Davis was in her father’s arms. He kissed her twice, and then, holding her back, gazed with proud delight at her beautiful features, never more striking than in that moment of joyful meeting.

“How well you are looking, Lizzy!” said he, with a thick utterance.

“And you too, dear papa,” said she, caressingly. “This quiet rural life seems to have agreed wonderfully with you. I declare you look five years younger for it, does he not, Mr. Beecher?”

“Ah, Beecher, how are you?” cried Davis, warmly shaking the other’s hand. “This *is* jolly, to be all together again,” said he, as, drawing his daughter’s arm within his own, and taking Beecher on the other side, he told the postilions to move forward, while they would find their way on foot.

“How did you ever hit upon this spot?” asked Beecher; “we could n’t find it on the map.”

“I came through here some four-and-twenty years ago, and I never forget a place nor a countenance. I thought at the time it might suit me, some one day or other, to remember, and you see I was right. You are grown fatter, Lizzy; at least I fancy so. But come, tell me about your life at Aix, – was it pleasant? was the place gay?”

“It was charming, papa!” cried she, in ecstasy; “had you only been with us, I could not have come away. Such delightful rides and drives, beautiful environs, and then the Cursaal of an evening, with all its odd people, – not that my guardian, here, fancied so much my laughing at them.”

“Well, you did n’t place much restraint upon yourself, I must say.”

“I was reserved even to prudery; I was the caricature of Anglo-Saxon propriety,” said she, with affected austerity.

“And what did they think of you, eh?” asked Davis trying to subdue the pride that would, in spite of him, twinkle in his eye.

“I was the belle of the season. I assure you it is perfectly true!”

“Come, come, Lizzy – ”

“Well, ask Mr. Beecher. Be honest now, and confess frankly, were you not sulky at driving out with me the way the people stared? Didn’t you complain that you never expected to come home from the play without a duel or something of the kind on your hands? Did you not induce me to ruin my toilette just to escape what you so delicately called ‘our notoriety’? Oh, wretched man! what triumphs did I not relinquish out of compliance to your taste for obscurity!”

“By Jove! we divided public attention with Ferouk Khan and his wives. I don’t see that my taste for obscurity obtained any brilliant success.”

“I never heard of such black ingratitude!” cried she, in mock indignation. “I assure you, pa, I was a martyr to his English notions, which, to me, seem to have had their origin in Constantinople.”

“Poor Beecher!” said Davis, laughingly.

“Poor Beecher, no, but happy Beecher, envied by thousands. Not indeed,” added she, with a smile, “that his appearance at this moment suggests any triumphant satisfaction. Oh, papa, you should have seen him when the Russian Prince Ezerboffsky asked me to dance, or when the Archduke Albrecht offered me his horses; or, better still, the evening the Margrave lighted up his conservatory just to let me see it.”

“Your guardianship had its anxieties, I perceive,” said Davis, dryly.

“I think it had,” said Beecher, sighing. “There were times I ‘d have given five thousand, if I had it, that she had been safe under your own charge.”

“My dear fellow, I’d have given fifty,” said Davis, “if I did n’t know she was just in as good hands as my own.” There was a racy heartiness in this speech that thrilled through Beecher’s heart, and he could scarcely credit his ears that it was Grog spoke it. “Ay, Beecher,” added he, as he drew the other’s arm closer to his side, “there was just one man – one single man in Europe – I ‘d have trusted with the charge.”

“Really, gentlemen,” said Lizzy, with a malicious sparkle of the eye, “I am lost in my conjectures whether I am to regard myself as a sort of human Koh-i-noor – a priceless treasure – or something so very difficult to guard, so perilous to protect, as can scarcely be accounted a flattery. Say, I entreat of you, to which category do I belong?”

“A little to each, I should say, – eh, Beecher?” cried Grog, laughingly.

“Oh, don’t appeal to *him*, papa. *He* only wants to vaunt his heroism the higher, because the fortress he guarded was so easy of assault!”

Beecher was ill-fitted to engage in such an encounter, and stammered out some commonplace apology for his own seeming want of gallantry.

“She’s too much for us, Beecher, – too much for us. It’s a pace we can’t keep up,” muttered Grog in the other’s ear. And Beecher nodded a ready assent to the speech.

“Well,” said Lizzy, gayly, “now that your anxieties are well over, I do entreat of you to unbend a little, and let us see the lively, light-hearted Mr. Annesley Beecher, of whose pleasant ways I have heard so much.”

“I used to be light-hearted enough once, eh, Davis?” said Beecher, with a sigh. “When you saw me first at the Derby – of, let me see, I don’t remember the year, but it was when Danby’s mare Petrilla won, – with eighteen to one ‘given and taken’ against her, the day of the race, – Brown Davy, the favorite, coming in a bad third, – he died the same night.”

“Was he ‘nobbled’?” asked Lizzy, dryly.

“What do you mean?” cried Grog, gruffly. “Where did you learn that word?”

“Oh, I’m quite strong in your choice vocabulary,” said she, laughingly; “and you are not to fancy that in the dissipations of Aix I have forgotten the cares of my education. My guardian there set me a task every morning, – a page of Burke’s Peerage and a column of the ‘Racing Calendar;’ and for the ninth Baron of Fitzfoodle, or the fifteenth winner of the Diddlesworth, you may call on me at a moment.”

The angry shadow on Davis’s brow gradually faded away, and he laughed a real, honest, and good-humored laugh.

“What do you say to the Count, Lizzy?” asked he next. “There was a fine gentleman, wasn’t he?”

“There was the ease and the self-possession of good breeding without the manners. He was amusing from his own self-content, and a sort of latent impression that he was taking you in, and when one got tired of that, he became downright stupid.”

“True as a book, every word of it!” cried Beecher, in hearty gratitude, for he detested the man, and was envious of his small accomplishments.

“His little caressing ways, too, ceased to be flatteries, when you saw that, like the cheap bonbons scattered at a carnival, they were made for the million.”

“Hit him again, he has n’t got no friends!” said Beecher, with an assumed slang in his tone.

“But worst of all was that mockery of good nature, – a false air of kindness about him. It was a spurious coinage, so cleverly devised that you looked at every good guinea afterwards with distrust.”

“How she knows him, – how she reads him!” cried Davis, in delight.

“He was very large print, papa,” said she, smiling.

“Confound me!” cried Beecher, “if I didn’t think you liked him, you used to receive him so graciously; and I’ll wager he thinks himself a prime favorite with you.”

“So he may, if it give him any pleasure,” said she, with a careless laugh.

Davis marked the expression of Beecher’s face as she said these words; he saw how that distrustful nature was alarmed, and he hastened to repair the mischief.

“I am sure you never affected to feel any regard for him, Lizzy?” said Davis.

“Regard for him!” said she, haughtily; “I should think not! Such people as he are like the hired horses that every one uses, and only asks that they should serve for the day they have taken them.”

“There, Beecher,” said Davis, with a laugh. “I sincerely hope she’s not going to discuss *your* character or *mine*.”

“By Jove! I hope not.” And in the tone in which Beecher uttered this there was an earnestness that made the other laugh heartily.

“Well, here we are. This is your home for the present,” said Davis, as he welcomed them to the little inn, whose household were all marshalled to receive them with fitting deference.

The arrangements within doors were even better than the picturesque exterior promised; and when Lizzy came down to dinner, she was in raptures about her room, its neatness even to elegance, and the glorious views that opened before the windows.

“I’m splendidly lodged too,” said Beecher; “and they have given me a dressing-room, with a little winding-stair to the river, and a bath in the natural rock. It is downright luxury, all this.”

Davis smiled contentedly as he listened. For days past had he been busied with these preparations, determined to make the spot appear in all its most favorable colors. Let us do him justice to own that his cares met a full success. Flowers abounded in all the rooms; and the perfumed air, made to seem tremulous by the sounds of falling water, was inexpressibly calming after the journey. The dinner, too, would have done honor to a more pretentious “hostel;” and the Steinberger, a cabinet wine, that the host would not part with except for “love as well as money,” was perfection. Better than all these, – better than the fresh trout with its gold and azure speckles, – better than the delicate Rehbraten with its luscious sauce, – better than the red partridges in their bed of truffles, and a dessert whose grapes rivalled those of Fontainebleau, – better, I say, than all, was the happy temper of the hour! Never were three people more disposed for enjoyment. To Lizzy, it was the oft dreamed-of

home, the quiet repose of a spot surrounded with all the charm of scenery, coming, too, just as the dissipations of gayety had begun to weary and pall upon her. To Beecher, it was the first moment of all his life in which he tasted peace. Here were neither duns nor bailiffs. It was a Paradise where no writ had ever wandered, nor the word “outlawry” had ever been uttered. As for Davis, if he had not actually won his game, he held in his hand the trump card that he knew must gain it. What signified, now, a day or even a week more or less; the labor of his long ambition was all but completed, and he saw the goal reached that he had striven for years to attain.

Nor were they less pleased with each other. Never had Lizzy seemed to Beecher’s eyes more fascinating than now. In all the blaze of full dress she never looked more beautiful than in that simple muslin, with the sky-blue ribbon in her glossy hair, and the bouquet of moss roses coquettishly placed above her ear, for – I mention it out of accuracy – she wore her hair drawn back, as was the mode about a century ago, and was somewhat ingenious in her imitation of that mock-shepherdess *coiffure* so popular with fine ladies of that time. She would have ventured on a “patch” if it were not out of fear for her father; not, indeed, that the delicate fairness of her skin, or the dazzling brilliancy of her eyes, needed the slightest aid from art. Was it with some eye to keeping a toilette that she wore a profusion of rings, many of great price and beauty? I know not her secret; if I did, I should assuredly tell it, for I suspect none of her coquetries were without their significance. To complete Beecher’s satisfaction, Davis was in a mood of good humor, such as he had never seen before.

Not a word of contradiction, not one syllable of disparagement fell from his lips, that Beecher usually watched with an utmost childish terror, dreading reproof at every moment, and not being over certain when his opinions would pass without a censure. Instead of this, Grog was conciliating even to gentleness, constantly referred to Beecher what he thought of this or that, and even deferred to his better judgment on points whereon he might have been supposed to be more conversant. Much valued reader, has it ever been your fortune in life to have had your opinions on law blandly approved of by an ex-Chancellor, your notions of medicine courteously confirmed by a great physician, or your naval tactics endorsed by an admiral of the fleet? If so, you can fully appreciate the ecstasy of Annesley Beecher as he found all his experiences of the sporting world corroborated by the “Court above.” This was the gold medal he had set his heart on for years, – this the great prize of all his life; and now he had won it, and he was really a “sharp fellow.” There is an intense delight in the thought of having realized a dream of ambition, of which, while our own hearts gave us the assurance of success, the world at large only scoffed at our attempting. To be able to say, “Yes, here I am, despite all your forebodings and all your predictions, – I knew it was ‘in me!’” is a very proud thing, and such a moment of vaingloriousness is pardonable enough.

How enjoyable at such a moment of triumph was it to hear Lizzy sing and play, making that miserable old piano discourse in a guise it had never dreamed of! She was in one of those moods wherein she blended the wildest flights of fancy with dashes of quaint humor, now breathing forth a melody of Spohr’s in accents of thrilling pathos, now hitting off in improvised doggerel a description of Aix and its company, with mimicries of their voice and manner irresistibly droll. In these imitations the Count, and even Beecher himself, figured, till Grog, fairly worn out with laughter, had to entreat her to desist.

As for Beecher, he was a good-tempered fellow, and the little raillery at himself took nothing from the pleasure of the description, and he laughed in ready acknowledgment of many a little trait of his own manner that he never suspected could have been detected by another.

“Ain’t she wonderful, – ain’t she wonderful?” exclaimed Grog, as she strolled out into the garden, and left them alone together.

“What I can’t make out is, she has no blank days,” said Beecher. “She was just as you saw her there, the whole time we were at Aix; and while she’s rattling away at the piano, and going on with all manner of fun, just ask her a serious question, – I don’t care about what, – and she’ll answer you as if she had been thinking of nothing else for the whole day before.”

“Had she been born in *your* rank of life, Beecher, where would she be now, – tell me that?” said Davis; and there was an almost fierce energy in the words as he spoke them.

“I can tell you one thing,” cried Beecher, in a transport of delight, – “there’s no rank too high for her this minute.”

“Well said, boy, – well said,” exclaimed Davis, warmly; “and here’s to her health.”

“That generous toast and cheer must have been in honor of myself,” said Lizzy, peeping in at the window, “and in acknowledgment I beg to invite you both to tea.”

CHAPTER IX. A SAUNTER BY MOONLIGHT

Lizzy Davis had retired to her room somewhat weary after the day's journey, not altogether unexcited by her meeting with her father. How was it that there was a gentleness, almost a tenderness, in his manner she had never known before? The short, stern address, the abrupt question, the stare piercing and defiant of one who seemed ever to distrust what he heard, were all replaced by a tone of quiet and easy confidence, and a look that bespoke perfect trustfulness.

"Have I only seen him hitherto in moments of trial and excitement; are these the real traits of his nature; is it the hard conflict of life calls forth the sterner features of his character; and might he, in happier circumstances, be ever kind and confiding, as I see him now?" What a thrill of ecstasy did the thought impart! What a realization of the home she had often dreamed of! "He mistakes me, too," said she, aloud, "if he fancies that my heart is set upon some high ambition. A life of quiet obscurity, in some spot peaceful and unknown as this, would suffice for all my wishes. I want no triumphs, – I covet no rivalries." A glance at herself in the glass at this moment sent the deep color to her cheek, and she blushed deeply. Was it that those bright, flashing eyes, that fair and haughty brow, and those lips tremulous with proud significance gave a denial to these words? Indeed, it seemed as much, for she quickly added, "Not that I would fly the field, or ingloriously escape the struggle – Who's there?" cried she, quickly, as a low tap came to the door.

"It is I, Lizzy. I heard you still moving about, and I thought I 'd propose half an hour's stroll in the moonlight before bed. What do you say to it?"

"I should like it of all things, papa," cried she, opening the door at once.

"Throw a shawl across your shoulders, child," said he; "the air is not always free from moisture. We 'll go along by the river-side."

A bright moon in a sky without a cloud lit up the landscape, and by the strongly marked contrast of light and shadow imparted a most striking effect to a scene wild, broken, and irregular. Fantastically shaped rocks broke the current of the stream; at every moment gnarled and twisted roots straggled along the shelving banks, and in the uncertain light assumed goblin shapes and forms, the plashing stream, as it rushed by, appearing to give motion to the objects around. Nor was the semblance all unreal, for here and there a pliant branch rose and fell on the surging water like the arm of some drowning swimmer.

The father and daughter walked along for some time in utter silence, and the thoughts of each filled with the scene before them. Lizzy fancied it was a conflict of river gods, – some great Titanic war, where angry giants were the combatants; or again, as fairer forms succeeded, they seemed a group of nymphs bathing in the soft moonlight. As for Grog, it reminded him of a row at Ascot, where the swell-mob smashed the police; and so strikingly did it call up the memory of the event that he laughed aloud and heartily.

"Do tell me what you are laughing at, papa," said she, entreatingly.

"It was something that I saw long ago, – something I was reminded of by those trees yonder, bobbing up and down with the current."

"But what was it?" asked she, more eagerly; for even yet the memory kept him laughing.

"Nothing that could interest you, girl," said he, bluntly; and then, as if ashamed of the rudeness of his speech, he added, "Though I have seen a good deal of life, Lizzy, there's but little of it I could recall for either your benefit or instruction."

Lizzy was silent; she wished him to speak on, but did not choose to question him. Strangely enough, too, though he shunned the theme, he had been glad if she had led him on to talk of it.

After a long pause he sighed heavily, and said: "I suppose every one, if truth were told, would have rather a sad tale to tell of the world when he comes to my age. It don't improve upon

acquaintance, I promise you. Not that I want to discourage *you* about it, my girl. You 'll come to my way of thinking one of these days, and it will be quite soon enough.”

“And have you really found men so false and worthless as you say?”

“I'll tell you in one word the whole story, Lizzy. The fellows that are born to a good station and good property are all fair and honest, if they like it; the rest of the world must be rogues, whether they like it or not.”

“This is a very disenchanting picture you put before me.” “Here 's how it is, girl,” said he, warming with his subject. “Every man in the world is a gambler; let him rail against dice, racing, cards, or billiards, he has a game of his own in his heart, and he's playing for a seat in the Cabinet, a place in the colonies, a bishopric, or the command of a regiment. The difference is, merely, that your regular play-man admits chance into his calculations, the other fellows don't; they pit pure skill against the table, and trust to their knowledge of the game.”

She sighed deeply, but did not speak.

“And the women are the same,” resumed he: “some scheming to get their husbands high office, some intriguing for honors or Court favor; all of them ready to do a sharp thing, – to make a hit on the Stock Exchange.”

“And are there none above these mean and petty subterfuges?” cried she, indignantly.

“Yes; the few I have told you, – they who come into the world to claim the stakes. They can afford to be high-minded, and generous, and noble-hearted, as much as they please. They are booked 'all right,' and need never trouble their heads about the race; and that is the real reason, girl, why these men have an ascendancy over all others. They are not driven to scramble for a place; they have no struggles to encounter; the crowd makes way for them as they want to pass; and if they have anything good, ay, or even good-looking, about them, what credit don't they get for it!”

“But surely there must be many a lowly walk where a man with contentment can maintain himself honorably and even proudly?”

“I don't know of them, if there be,” said Davis, sulkily. “Lawyers, parsons, merchants, are all, I fancy, pretty much alike, – all on 'the dodge.’”

“And Beecher, – poor Beecher?” broke in Lizzy. And there was a blended pity and tenderness in the tone that made it very difficult to say what her question really implied.

“Why do you call him poor Beecher?” asked he, quickly. “He ain't so poor in one sense of the word.”

“It was in no allusion to his fortune I spoke. I was thinking of him solely with reference to his character.”

“And he is poor Beecher, is he, then?” asked Davis, half sternly.

If she did not reply, it was rather in the fear of offending her father, whose manner, so suddenly changing, apprised her of an interest in the subject she had never suspected.

“Look here, Lizzy,” said he, drawing her arm more closely to his side, while he bespoke her attention; “men born in Beecher's class don't need to be clever; they have no necessity for the wiles and schemes and subtleties that – that fellows like myself, in short, must practise. What they want is good address, pleasing manners, – all the better if they be good-looking. It don't require genius to write a check on one's banker; there is no great talent needed to say 'Yes,' or 'No,' in the House of Lords. The world – I mean their own world – likes them all the more if they have n't got great abilities. Now Beecher is just the fellow to suit them.”

“He is not a peer, surely?” asked she, hastily.

“No, he ain't yet, but he may be one any day. He is as sure of the peerage as – I am not! and then, poor Beecher – as you called him awhile ago – becomes the Lord Viscount Lackington, with twelve or fourteen thousand a year! I tell you, girl, that of all the trades men follow, the very best, to enjoy life, is to be an English lord with a good fortune.”

“And is it true, as I have read,” asked Lizzy, “that this high station, so fenced around by privileges, is a prize open to all who have talent or ability to deserve it, – that men of humble origin, if they be gifted with high qualities, and devote them ardently to their country’s service, are adopted, from time to time, into that noble brotherhood?”

“All rubbish; don’t believe a word of it. It’s a flam and a humbug, – a fiction like the old story about an Englishman’s house being his castle, or that balderdash, ‘No man need criminate himself.’ They ‘re always inventing ‘wise saws’ like these in England, and they get abroad, and are believed, at last, just by dint of repeating. Here ‘s the true state of the case,” said he, coming suddenly to a halt, and speaking with greater emphasis. “Here I stand, Christopher Davis, with as much wit under the crown of my hat as any noble lord on the woolsack, and I might just as well try to turn myself into a horse and be first favorite for the Oaks, as attempt to become a peer of Great Britain. It ain’t to be done, girl, – it ain’t to be done!”

“But, surely, I have heard of men suddenly raised to rank and title for the services – ”

“So you do. They want a clever lawyer, now and then, to help them on with a peerage case; or, if the country grows forgetful of them, they attract some notice by asking a lucky general to join them; and even then they do it the way a set of old ladies would offer a seat in the coach to a stout-looking fellow on a road beset with robbers, – they hope he ‘ll fight for ‘em; but, after all, it takes about three generations before one of these new hands gets regularly recognized by the rest.”

“What haughty pride!” exclaimed she; but nothing in her tone implied reprobation.

“Ain’t it haughty pride?” cried he; “but if you only knew how it is nurtured in them, how they are worshipped! They walk down St. James’s Street, and the policeman elbows me out of the way to make room for them; they stroll into Tattersall’s, and the very horses cock their tails and step higher as they trot past; they go into church, and the parson clears his throat and speaks up in a fine round voice for them. It’s only because the blessed sun is not an English institution, or he ‘d keep all his warmth and light for the peerage!”

“And have they, who render all this homage, no shame for their self-abasement?”

“Shame! why, the very approach to them is an honor. When a lord in the ring at Newmarket nods his head to me and says, ‘How d’ ye do, Davis?’ my pals – my acquaintances, I mean – are twice as respectful to me for the rest of the day. Not that *I* care for that,” added he, sternly; “I know *them* a deuced sight better than they fancy! – far better than *they* know *me!*”

Lizzy fell into a reverie; her thoughts went back to a conversation she had once held with Beecher about the habits of the great world, and all the difficulties to its approach.

“I wish I could dare to put a question to you, papa,” said she, at last.

“Do so, girl. I ‘ll do my best to answer it”

“And not be angry at my presumption, – not be offended with me?”

“Not a bit. Be frank with me, and you ‘ll find me just as candid.”

“What I would ask, then, is this, – and mind, papa, it is in no mere curiosity, no idle indulgence of a passing whim I would ask it, but for sake of self-guidance and direction, – who are we? – what are we?”

The blood rose to Davis’s face and temples till he became crimson; his nostrils dilated, and his eyes flashed with a wild lustre. Had the bitterest insult of an enemy been hurled at his face before the open world, his countenance could not have betrayed an expression of more intense passion.

“By heaven!” said he, with a long-drawn breath, “I did n’t think there was one in Europe would have asked me that much to my face. There’s no denying it, girl, you have my own pluck in you.”

“If I ever thought it would have moved you so – ”

“Only to make me love you the more, girl, – to make me know you for my own child in heart and soul,” cried he, pressing her warmly to him.

“But I would not have cost you this emotion, dearest pa – ”

“It’s over now; I am as cool as yourself. There ‘s my hand, – there ‘s not much show of nervousness there. ‘Who are we?’” exclaimed he, fiercely, echoing her question. “I ‘d like to know how many of that eight-and-twenty millions they say we are in England could answer such a question? There’s a short thick book or two tells about the peerage and baronetage, and says who are they; but as for the rest of us – ” A wave of the hand finished the sentence. “My own answer would be that of many another: I ‘m the son of a man who bore the same name, and who, if alive, would tell the same story. As to what we are, that’s another question,” added he, shrewdly; “though, to be sure, English life and habits have established a very easy way of treating the matter. Everybody with no visible means of support, and who does nothing for his own subsistence, is either a gentleman or a vagrant. If he be positively and utterly unable to do anything for himself, he ‘s a gentleman; if he can do a stroke of work in some line or other, he ‘s only a vagrant.”

“And you, papa?” asked she, with an accent as calm and unconcerned as might be.

“I? – I am a little of both, perhaps,” said he, after a pause.

A silence ensued, long enough to be painful to each; Lizzy did not dare to repeat her question, although it still remained unanswered, and Davis knew well that he had not met it frankly, as he promised. What a severe struggle was that his mind now endured! The hoarded secret of his whole life, – the great mystery to which he had sacrificed all the happiness of a home, for which he had consented to estrange himself from his child, training her up amidst associations and habits every one of which increased the distance between them, – there it was now on his lip; a word might reveal it, and by its utterance might be blasted all the fondest hopes his heart had ever cherished. To make Lizzy a lady, to surround her not only with all the wants and requirements of station, but to imbue her mind with sentiments and modes of thought such as befit that condition, had been the devoted labor of his life. For this he had toiled and struggled, contrived, plotted, and schemed for years long. What terrible scenes had he not encountered, with what desperate characters not associated! In the fearful commerce of the play-table there was not a dark passion of the human heart he had not explored, – to know men in their worst aspects, in their insolence of triumph, the meanness of their defeat, in their moments of avarice, in their waste; to read their natures so that every start or sigh, a motion of the finger, a quivering of the lip should have its significance; to perceive, as by an instinct, wherein the craft or subtlety of each lay, and by the same rapid intuition to know his weak point also! Men have won high collegiate honors with less intensity of study than he gave to this dark pursuit; men have come out of battle with less peril to life than he faced every day of his existence, and all for one object, – all that his daughter might breathe an atmosphere from which he must live excluded, and know a world whose threshold he should never pass. Such was the terrible conflict that now raged within him as he reviewed the past, and saw to what a narrow issue he had reduced his one chance of happiness. “There she stands now,” thought he, “all that my fondest hopes had ever fashioned her; and who is to say what one word – one single word uttered by my lips – may not make of that noble nature, pure and spotless as it is? How will she bear to hear that her station is a deception, her whole life a lie, – that she is the daughter of Grog Davis, the leg?” Heaven knows with what dexterous artifices he had often met this difficulty as it used to present itself to his mind, how he had seen in what way he could extricate himself, how reconcile his own shortcomings with her high-soaring tastes and habits! Whatever such devices he had ever conceived, none came to his aid now; not one offered him the slightest assistance.

Then came another thought, – “How long is this deception to be carried on? Am I to wait?” said he, “and if so, for what? Ay, there’s the question, for what? Is it that some other may break the news to her, and tell her whose daughter she is?” In that world he knew best he could well imagine with what especial malice such a tale would be revealed. Not that slander need call imagination to its aid. Alas! his life had incidents enough for malignity to gloat over!

His stout arm shook, and his strong frame trembled with a sort of convulsive shudder as these thoughts flashed across his mind.

“Are you cold, dearest pa? Are you ill?” asked she, eagerly.

“No. Why do you ask?” said he, sternly.

“You trembled all over; I was afraid you were not well.”

“I ‘m never ill,” said he, in the same tone. “There ‘s a bullet in me somewhere about the hip – they can’t make out exactly where – gives me a twinge of pain now and then. Except that, I never knew what ailment means.”

“In what battle?”

“It was n’t a battle,” broke he in; “it was a duel. It’s an old story now, and not worth remembering. There, you need not shudder, girl; the fellow who shot me is alive, though, I must say, he has n’t a very graceful way of walking. Do you ever read the newspapers, – did they allow you ever to read them at school?”

“No; but occasionally I used to catch a glance at them in the drawing-room. It was a kind of reading fascinated me intensely, it was so real. But why do you ask me?”

“I don’t know why I asked the question,” muttered he, half moodily, and hung his head down. “Yes, I do,” cried he, after a pause. “I wanted to know if you ever saw *my* name – our name – in the public prints.”

“Once, – only once, and very long ago, I did, and I asked the governess if the name were common in England, and she said, ‘Yes.’ I remember the paragraph that attracted me to this very hour. It was the case of a young man – I forget the name – who shot himself in despair, after some losses at play, and the narrative was headed, ‘More of Grog Davis!’”

Davis started back, and, in a voice thick and hoarse with passion, cried out, —

“And then? What next?” The words were uttered in a voice so fearfully wild that Lizzy stood in a sort of stupefied terror, and unable to reply. “Don’t you hear me, girl?” cried he. “I asked you what came next.”

“There was an account of an inquest, – some investigation as to how the poor fellow had met his death. I remember little about that. I was only curious to learn who this Grog Davis might be – ”

“And they could n’t tell you, it seems!”

“No; they had never heard of him.”

“Then I ‘ll tell you, girl. Here he stands before you.”

“You! papa – you – dearest pa! Oh, no, no!” cried she, imploringly, as she threw herself on his neck and sobbed bitterly, – “oh no! I ‘ll not believe it.”

“And why not believe it? What was there in that same story that should prejudice *me*? There, there, girl, if you give way thus, it will offend me, – ay, Lizzy, offend me.”

She raised her head from his shoulder, dried her eyes, and stood calm and unmoved before him. Her pale face, paler in the bright moonlight, now showed not a trace of passion or emotion.

Davis would have given his right hand at that moment that she had been led into some burst of excitement, some outbreak of passionate feeling, which, in rebuking, might have carried him away from all thoughts about himself; but she was cold and still and silent, like one who has heard some terrible tidings, but yet has summoned up courage for the trial. There was that in her calm, impassive stare that cut him to the very heart; nor could any words have reproached him so bitterly as that steadfast look.

“If you don’t know who we are, you know what we are, girl. Is that not so?” cried he, in a thick and passionate tone. “I meant to have told it you fifty times. There was n’t a week in the last two years that I did n’t, at least, begin a letter to you about it I did more: I cut all the things out of the newspapers and made a collection of them, and intended, some day or other, you should read them. Indeed, it was only because you seemed so happy there that, I spared you. I felt the day must come, though. Know it you must, sooner or later, and better from me than another I mean better for the other; for, by heaven! I ‘d have shot him who told you. Why don’t you speak to me, girl? What’s passing in your mind?”

“I scarcely know,” said she, in a hollow voice. “I don’t quite feel sure I am awake!”

“Yes!” cried he, with a terrible oath, “you *are* awake; it was the past was the dream! When you were the Princess, and every post brought you some fresh means of extravagance, —*that* was the dream! The world went well with myself in those days. Luck stood to me in whatever I touched. In all I ventured I was sure to come right, as if I had made my bargain with Fortune. But the jade threw me over at last, that she did. From the hour I went in against Hope’s stables at Rickworth, — that’s two years and eleven days to-day, — I never won a bet! The greenest youngsters from Oxford beat me at my own weapons. I went on selling, — now a farm, now a house, now a brood mare. I sent the money all to you, girl, every guinea of it. What I did myself I did on tick till the September settling at Cottiswoode, and then it was all up. I was ruined!”

“Ruined!” echoed she, while she grasped his arm and drew him closer to her side; “you surely had made friends — ”

“Friends are capital things when the world goes well with you, but friends are fond of a good cook and iced champagne, and they don’t fancy broken boots and a bad hat. Besides, what credit is to the merchant, luck is to one of us. Let the word get abroad luck is against you; let them begin to say, ‘There ‘s that poor devil Davis in for it again; he’s so unlucky!’ — once they say that, you are shunned like a fellow with the plague; none will associate with you, none give you a helping hand or a word of counsel. Why, the grooms wouldn’t gallop if I was on the ground, for fear my bad luck might strain a sinew and slip a ligament! And they were right too! Smile if you like, girl, — I am not a very superstitious fellow, — but nobody shall persuade me there ain’t such a thing as luck. Be that as it may, *mine* turned, — I was ruined!”

“And were there none to come to your aid? You must surely have lent a helping hand to many — ”

“Look here, girl,” said he; “now that we are on this subject, you may as well understand it aright. If a gentleman born — a fellow like Beecher, there — comes to grief, there’s always plenty of others ready to serve him; some for the sake of his family, some for his name, some because there’s always the chance that he may pay one day or other. Snobs, too, would help him, because he ‘s the Honorable Annesley Beecher; but it’s vastly different when it’s Grog Davis is in case. Every one rejoices when a leg breaks down.”

“A leg is the slang for — for — ”

“For a betting man,” interposed Davis. “When a fellow takes up the turf as a profession, they call him ‘a leg,’ — not that they ‘d exactly say it to his face!” added he, with a smile of intense sarcasm.

“Go on,” said she, faintly, after a slight pause.

“Go on with what?” cried he, rudely. “I’ve told you everything. You wanted to know what I was, and how I made my living. Well, you know it all now. To be sure, the newspapers, if you read them, could give you more precise details; but there’s one thing, girl, they could n’t blink, — there’s not one of them could say that what my head planned overnight my hand was not ready to defend in the morning! I can’t always throw a main, but I ‘ll hit my man, — and at five-and-thirty paces, if he don’t like to stand closer.”

“And what led you to this life, papa? Was it choice?”

“I have told you enough already; too much, mayhap,” said he, doggedly. “Question me no more!”

Had Davis but seen the face of her at his side, what a terrible shock it would have given him, hard and stern as he was! She was pale as marble, — even the lips were colorless; while along her cheeks a heavy tear stole slowly along. It was the only one she shed, but it cost an agony.

“And this is the awaking from that glorious dream I have long been lost in? — this the explanation of that life of costly extravagance, where every wish was answered, every taste pampered. This is the reverse of that medal which represented me as noble by birth and high in station!” If these were the first bitter thoughts that crossed her mind, her next were to ask herself why it was that the tidings had not humiliated her more deeply. “How is it that while I see and hear all this,” cried she, “I listen in a spirit of defiance, not defeat? Is it that in my heart I dare to arraign the decrees the world has adopted

for its guidance? Do I presume to believe that I can play the rebel successfully against the haughtiest aristocracy of Europe? – There is yet one question, papa,” said she, slowly and deliberately, “that I would wish to ask you. It is the last I will ever put, leaving to your own discretion to answer it or not. Why was it – I mean, with what object did you place me where by habit and education I should contract ideas of life so widely different from those I was born to?”

“Can’t you guess?” said he, rudely.

“Mayhap I do guess the reason,” said she, in a low but unbroken voice. “I remember your saying one night to Mr. Beecher, ‘When a colt has a turn of speed, he ‘s always worth the training.’”

Davis grew crimson; his very ears tingled as the blood mounted to his head. Was it shame, was it anger, was it a strange pride to see the traits of his own heart thus reflected on his child, or was it a blending of all three together? At all events, he never uttered a word, but walked slowly along at her side.

A low faint sigh from Lizzy suddenly aroused him, and he said, “Are you ill, – are you tired, girl?”

“I ‘d like to go back to the house,” said she, calmly but weakly. He turned without a word, and they walked on towards the inn.

“When I proposed this walk, Lizzy, I never meant it to have been so sad a one.”

“Nor yours the fault if it is so,” said she, drearily.

“I could, it is true, have kept you longer in the dark. I might have maintained this deception a week or two longer.”

“Oh, that were useless; the mistake was in not – No matter – it was never a question wherein I could have a voice. Has n’t the night grown colder?”

“No; it’s just what it was when we came out,” said he, gruffly. “Now that you know all this affair,” resumed he, after a lapse of some minutes, “there ‘s another matter I ‘d like to talk over; it touches yourself, too, and we may as well have it now as later. What about Beecher; he has been paying you attentions, hasn’t he?”

“None beyond what I may reasonably expect from one in his position towards me.”

“Yes, but he has, though. I sent over Lienstahl to report to me, and he says that Beecher’s manner implied attachment, and yours showed no repugnance to him. Is this true?”

“It may be, for aught I know,” said she, indifferently. “Mr. Beecher probably knows what he meant. I certainly can answer for myself, and will say that whatever my manner might imply, my heart – if that be the name for it – gave no concurrence to what the Count attributed to me.”

“Do you dislike him?”

“Dislike? No; certainly not; he is too gentle, too obliging, too conciliating in manner, too well bred to create dislike. He is not very brilliant – ”

“He ‘ll be a peer,” broke in Davis.

“I suspect that all his views of life are deeply tinged with prejudice?”

“He’ll be a peer,” continued Davis.

“He has been utterly neglected in education.”

“He don’t want it.”

“I mean that to suit the station he fills – ”

“He has got the station; he’s sure of it; he can’t be stripped of it. In one word, girl, he has, by right and birth, rank and fortune, such as ten generations of men like myself, laboring hard every hour of their lives, could never win. He ‘ll be a peer of England, and I know of no title means so much.”

“But of all his failings,” said Lizzy, who seemed to take little heed of her father’s interruptions, while steadily following out her own thoughts, – “of all his failings, he has none greater or more pernicious than the belief that it is a mark of intelligence to outwit one’s neighbor; that cunning is a high quality, and craft means genius.”

“These might be poor qualities to gain a living with,” said Davis, “but I tell you, once for all, he does n’t need to be brilliant, or witty, or any other nonsense of that kind. He ‘ll have the right to go where all the cleverness of the world couldn’t place him, to live in a set where, if he could Write plays like Shakspeare, build bridges like Brunel, or train a horse like John Scott, it would n’t avail him a brass farthing; and if you only knew, child, what these people think of each other, and what the world thinks of *them*, you ‘d see it’s the best stake ever was run for.”

Lizzy never replied a word; every syllable of her father’s speech was, as it were, “filtering down” into her mind, and she brooded long over the thoughts thus suggested. Thus, walking along in silence, side by side, they drew nigh the house. They had now gained the little garden before the door, and were standing in the broad full moonlight, face to face, Davis saw that her eyes were red and her cheeks marked by tears; but an impassive calm, and a demeanor subdued even to coldness, seemed to have succeeded to this emotion. “Oh, my poor girl,” broke he out, in a voice of deepest feeling, “if I did n’t know the world so well, – if I did n’t know how little one gains by indulging affection, – if I did n’t know, besides, how you yourself will think of all this some ten or twelve years hence, I could n’t have the heart for it.”

“And – must – it – be?” faltered she out, in a broken accent.

Davis threw his arm around her, and, pressing her to him, sobbed bitterly. “There, there,” cried he, “go in, – go in, child; go to bed, and get some sleep.” And with this he turned quickly away and left her.

CHAPTER X. A RIDE TO NEUWIED

Long before Lizzy had composed herself to sleep – for her heart was torn by a first sorrow, and she lay restless and fevered – her father, mounted on a post-horse, was riding away towards the Rhine. He had desired that the reply to his telegraphic message should be addressed to him at the post-office of Neuwied, and thither he was now bent. It is a strange thing, that when the affections of men of this stamp are deeply moved, – when their sensibilities, long dulled and hardened by the rubs of life, are once evoked, – the feelings excited are less those of gentleness and tenderness than an almost savage desire for some personal conflict. Urging his horse to full speed, Davis spared neither whip nor spur. Alone upon that solitary road, he asked himself aloud if he were less alone in the broad, bleak world? “Is not the ‘field’ against me wherever I go? I never heard of the fellow that had not some ‘moorings’ – some anchorage – except myself.” But a brief hour ago and there was one who loved him with all her heart, – who saw, or fancied she saw, a rich mine of generous qualities in his rough manners and blunt address, – who pictured to her mind what such a nature might have been under happier circumstances and with better culture. “And now,” cried he, aloud, – “now she knows me for what I am, how will she bear this? Will she sink under it, will it crush her, or has she enough of my own blood in her veins to meet it courageously? Oh! if she only knew the world as I do, – what a mean coward it is, how it bullies the weak and truckles to the strong, how it frowns down the timid and simpers to the sturdy! Every man – ay, and every woman – can sell his life dearly; and strange it is, one only learns the value of this secret too late. Let a fellow start with it, and see what it does for him. *I* went at them single-handed; *I* went down all alone into the ring, and have they beaten *me*? I had no honorable or right honorable friends to pick *me* out of a scrape. It would be hard to find three men, with good hats on them, would bail me to the amount of ten pounds; and here I am to-day just as ready to face them all as ever.”

What canting nonsense do we occasionally read in certain quarters to disparage mere personal courage, – “mere personal courage”! We are reminded that the ignoble quality is held in common with the bull-dog, and that in this essential he is our master; we are reminded that it is a low and vulgar attribute that neither elevates nor enlightens, that the meanest creatures are often gifted with it, and the noblest natures void of it. To all this we give a loud and firm denial; and we affirm as steadfastly, that without it there is neither truth nor manliness. The self-reliance that makes a man maintain his word, be faithful to his friendships, and honorable in his dealings, has no root in a heart that shakes with craven fear. The life of a coward is the voyage of a ship with a leak, – eternal contrivance, never-ceasing emergency. All thoughts dashed with a perpetual fear of death, what room is there for one generous emotion, one great or high-hearted ambition?

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