

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**WHAT WILL HE DO
WITH IT? – VOLUME
03**

Эдвард Джордж Бульвер-Литтон
What Will He Do
with It? — Volume 03

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=35006209

What Will He Do with It? — Volume 03:

Содержание

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| BOOK III | 4 |
| CHAPTER I | 4 |
| CHAPTER II | 12 |
| CHAPTER III | 14 |
| CHAPTER IV | 15 |
| CHAPTER V | 20 |
| CHAPTER VI | 28 |
| CHAPTER VII | 35 |
| CHAPTER VIII | 40 |
| CHAPTER IX | 44 |
| Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. | 47 |

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

What Will He Do with It? — Volume 03

BOOK III

CHAPTER I

Certes, the lizard is a shy and timorous creature. He runs into chinks and crannies if you come too near to him, and sheds his very tail for fear, if you catch it by the tip. He has not his being in good society: no one cages him, no one pets. He is an idle vagrant. But when he steals through the green herbage, and basks unmolested in the sun, he crowds perhaps as much enjoyment into one summer hour as a parrot, however pampered and erudite, spreads over a whole drawing-room life spent in saying "How dye do" and "Pretty Poll."

ON that dull and sombre summer morning in which the grandfather and grandchild departed from the friendly roof of Mr. Merle, very dull and very sombre were the thoughts of little Sophy. She walked slowly behind the gray cripple, who had need

to lean so heavily on his staff, and her eye had not even a smile for the golden buttercups that glittered on dewy meads alongside the barren road.

Thus had they proceeded apart and silent till they had passed the second milestone. There, Waife, rousing from his own reveries, which were perhaps yet more dreary than those of the dejected child, halted abruptly, passed his hand once or twice rapidly over his forehead, and, turning round to Sophy, looked into her face with great kindness as she came slowly to his side.

"You are sad, little one?" said he.

"Very sad, Grandy."

"And displeased with me? Yes, displeased that I have taken you suddenly away from the pretty young gentleman, who was so kind to you, without encouraging the chance that you were to meet with him again."

"It was not like you, Grandy," answered Sophy; and her underlip slightly pouted, while the big tears swelled to her eye.

"True," said the vagabond; "anything resembling common-sense is not like me. But don't you think that I did what I felt was best for you? Must I not have some good cause for it, whenever I have the heart deliberately to vex you?"

Sophy took his hand and pressed it, but she could not trust herself to speak, for she felt that at such effort she would have burst out into hearty crying. Then Waife proceeded to utter many of those wise sayings, old as the hills, and as high above our sorrows as hills are from the valley in which we walk. He said

how foolish it was to unsettle the mind by preposterous fancies and impossible hopes. The pretty young gentleman could never be anything to her, nor she to the pretty young gentleman. It might be very well for the pretty young gentleman to promise to correspond with her, but as soon as he returned to his friends he would have other things to think of, and she would soon be forgotten; while she, on the contrary, would be thinking of him, and the Thames and the butterflies, and find hard life still more irksome. Of all this, and much more, in the general way of consolers who set out on the principle that grief is a matter of logic, did Gentleman Waife deliver himself with a vigour of ratiocination which admitted of no reply, and conveyed not a particle of comfort. And feeling this, that great actor—not that he was acting then—suddenly stopped, clasped the child in his arms, and murmured in broken accents,—“But if I see you thus cast down, I shall have no strength left to hobble on through the world; and the sooner I lie down, and the dust is shovelled over me, why, the better for you; for it seems that Heaven sends you friends, and I tear you from them.”

And then Sophy fairly gave way to her sobs: she twined her little arms round the old man's neck convulsively, kissed his rough face with imploring pathetic fondness, and forced out through her tears, “Don't talk so! I've been ungrateful and wicked. I don't care for any one but my own dear, dear Grandy.”

After this little scene, they both composed themselves, and felt much lighter of heart. They pursued their journey, no

longer apart, but side by side, and the old man leaning, though very lightly, on the child's arm. But there was no immediate reaction from gloom to gayety. Waife began talking in softened undertones, and vaguely, of his own past afflictions; and partial as was the reference, how vast did the old man's sorrows seem beside the child's regrets; and yet he commented on them as if rather in pitying her state than grieving for his own.

"Ah, at your age, my darling, I had not your troubles and hardships. I had not to trudge these dusty roads on foot with a broken-down good-for-nothing scatterling; I trod rich carpets, and slept under silken curtains. I took the air in gay carriages,— I such a scapegrace; and you, little child, you so good! All gone, all melted away from me, and not able now to be sure that you will have a crust of bread this day week."

"Oh, yes! I shall have bread, and you too, Grandy," cried Sophy, with cheerful voice. "It was you who taught me to pray to God, and said that in all your troubles God had been good to you: and He has been so good to me since I prayed to Him; for I have no dreadful Mrs. Crane to beat me now, and say things more hard to bear than beating; and you have taken me to yourself. How I prayed for that! And I take care of you too, Grandy,— don't I? I prayed for that too; and as to carriages," added Sophy, with superb air, "I don't care if I am never in a carriage as long as I live; and you know I have been in a van, which is bigger than a carriage, and I didn't like that at all. But how came people to behave so ill to you, Grandy?"

"I never said people behaved ill to me, Sophy."

"Did not they take away the carpets and silk curtains, and all the fine things you had as a little boy?"

"I don't know," replied Waife, with a puzzled look, "that people actually took them away; but they melted away."

"However, I had much still to be thankful for: I was so strong, and had such high spirits, Sophy, and found people not behaving ill to me,—quite the contrary, so kind. I found no Crane (she monster) as you did, my little angel. Such prospects before me, if I had walked straight towards them! But I followed my own fancy, which led me zigzag; and now that I would stray back into the high road, you see before you a man whom a Justice of the Peace could send to the treadmill for presuming to live without a livelihood."

SOPHY.—"Not without a livelihood!—the what did you call it?—independent income,—that is, the Three Pounds, Grandy?"

WAIFFE (admiringly).—"Sensible child. That is true. Yes, Heaven is very good to me still. Ah! what signifies fortune? How happy I was with my dear Lizzy, and yet no two persons could live more from hand to mouth."

SOPHY (rather jealously).—"tizzy?"

WAIFFE (with moistened eyes, and looking down).—"My wife. She was only spared to me two years: such sunny years! And how grateful I ought to be that she did not live longer. She was saved—such—such—such shame and misery!" A long pause.

Waife resumed, with a rush from memory, as if plucking

himself from the claws of a harpy,— "What's the good of looking back? A man's gone self is a dead thing. It is not I—now tramping this road, with you to lean upon—whom I see, when I would turn to look behind on that which I once was: it is another being, defunct and buried; and when I say to myself, 'that being did so and so,' it is like reading an epitaph on a tombstone. So, at last, solitary and hopeless, I came back to my own land; and I found you,—a blessing greater than I had ever dared to count on. And how was I to maintain you, and take you from that long-nosed alligator called Crane, and put you in womanly gentle hands; for I never thought then of subjecting you to all you have since undergone with me,—I who did not know one useful thing in life by which a man can turn a penny. And then, as I was all alone in a village ale-house, on my way back from- it does not signify from what, or from whence, but I was disappointed and despairing, Providence mercifully threw in my way—Mr. Ruggie, and ordained me to be of great service to that ruffian, and that ruffian of great use to me."

Sorfiy.— "Ah, how was that?"

WAIFE.— "It was fair time in the village wherein I stopped, and Ruggie's principal actor was taken off by delirium tremens, which is Latin for a disease common to men who eat little and drink much. Ruggie came into the alehouse bemoaning his loss. A bright thought struck me. Once in my day I had been used to acting. I offered to try my chance on Mr. Ruggie's stage: he caught at me, I at him. I succeeded: we came to terms, and my little

Sophy was thus taken from that ringleted crocodile, and placed with Christian females who wore caps and read their Bible. Is not Heaven good to us, Sophy; and to me too—me, such a scamp?"

"And you did all that,—suffered all that for my sake?"

"Suffered, but I liked it. And, besides, I must have done something; and there were reasons—in short, I was quite happy; no, not actually happy, but comfortable and merry. Providence gives thick hides to animals that must exist in cold climates; and to the man whom it reserves for sorrow, Providence gives a coarse, jovial temper. Then, when by a mercy I was saved from what I most disliked and dreaded, and never would have thought of but that I fancied it might be a help to you,—I mean the London stage,—and had that bad accident on the railway, how did it end? Oh! in saving you" (and Waife closed his eyes and shuddered), "in saving your destiny from what might be much worse for you, body and soul, than the worst that has happened to you with me. And so we have been thrown together; and so you have supported me; and so, when we could exist without Mr. Rugge, Providence got rid of him for us. And so we are now walking along the high road; and through yonder trees you can catch a peep of the roof under which we are about to rest for a while; and there you will learn what I have done with the Three Pounds!"

"It is not the Spotted Boy, Grandy?"

"No," said Waife, sighing; "the Spotted Boy is a handsome income; but let us only trust in Providence, and I should not

wonder if our new acquisition proved a monstrous—"

"Monstrous!"

"Piece of good fortune."

CHAPTER II

The investment revealed.

Gentleman Waife passed through a turnstile, down a narrow lane, and reached a solitary cottage. He knocked at the door; an old peasant woman opened it, and dropped him a civil courtesy. "Indeed, sir, I am glad you are come. I 'se most afeared he be dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Waife. "Oh, Sophy, if he should be dead!"
"Who?"

Waife did not heed the question. "What makes you think him dead?" said he, fumbling in his pockets, from which he at last produced a key. "You have not been disobeying my strict orders, and tampering with the door?"

"Lor' love ye, no, sir. But he made such a noise at fust—awful! And now he's as still as a corpse. And I did peep through the keyhole, and he was stretched stark."

"Hunger, perhaps," said the Comedian; "'t is his way when he has been kept fasting much over his usual hours. Follow me, Sophy." He put aside the woman, entered the sanded kitchen, ascended a stair that led from it; and Sophy following, stopped at a door and listened: not a sound. Timidly he unlocked the portals and crept in, when, suddenly such a rush,—such a spring, and a mass of something vehement yet soft, dingy yet whitish, whirled

past the actor, and came pounce against Sophy, who therewith uttered a shriek. "Stop him, stop him, for heaven's sake," cried Waife. "Shut the door below,—seize him." Downstairs, however, went the mass, and downstairs after it hobbled Waife, returning in a few moments with the recaptured and mysterious fugitive. "There," he cried triumphantly to Sophy, who, standing against the wall with her face buried in her frock, long refused to look up,— "there,—tame as a lamb, and knows me. See!" he seated himself on the floor, and Sophy, hesitatingly opening her eyes, beheld gravely gazing at her from under a profusion of shaggy locks an enormous—

CHAPTER III

Denouement!

POODLE!

CHAPTER IV

Zoology in connection with history.

"Walk to that young lady, sir,—walk, I say." The poodle slowly rose on his hind legs, and, with an aspect inexpressibly solemn, advanced towards Sophy, who hastily receded into the room in which the creature had been confined.

"Make a bow—no—a bow, sir; that is right: you can shake hands another time. Run down, Sophy, and ask for his dinner."

"Yes; that I will;" and Sophy flew down the stairs.

The dog, still on his hind legs, stood in the centre of the floor dignified, but evidently expectant.

"That will do; lie down and die. Die this moment, sir." The dog stretched himself out, closed his eyes, and to all appearance gave up the ghost. "A most splendid investment," said Waife, with enthusiasm; "and upon the whole, clog cheap. Ho! you are not to bring up his dinner; it is not you who are to make friends with the dog; it is my little girl; send her up; Sophy, Sophy!"

"She be fritted, sir," said the woman, holding a plate of canine comestibles; "but lauk, sir, bent he really dead?"

"Sophy, Sophy"

"Please let me stay here, Grandy," said Sophy's voice from the foot of the stairs.

"Nonsense! it is sixteen hours since he has had a morsel to

eat. And he will never bite the hand that feeds him now. Come up, I say."

Sophy slowly reascended, and Waife summoning the poodle to life, insisted upon the child's feeding him. And indeed, when that act of charity was performed, the dog evinced his gratitude by a series of unsophisticated bounds and waggings of the tail, which gradually removed Sophy's apprehensions, and laid the foundation for that intimate friendship which is the natural relation between child and dog.

"And how did you come by him?" asked Sophy; "and is this really the—the INVESTMENT?"

"Shut the door carefully, but see first that the woman is not listening. Lie down, sir, there, at the feet of the young lady. Good dog! How did I come by him? I will tell you. The first day we arrived at the village which we have just left I went into the tobacconist's. While I was buying my ounce of canaster that dog entered the shop. In his mouth was a sixpence wrapped in paper. He lifted himself on his hind legs, and laid his missive on the counter. The shopwoman—you know her, Mrs. Traill—unfolded the paper and read the order. 'Clever dog that, sir,' said she. 'To fetch and carry?' said I, indifferently. 'More than that, sir; you shall see. The order is for two penn'orth of snuff. The dog knows he is to take back fourpence. I will give him a penny short.' So she took the sixpence and gave the dog threepence out of it. The dog shook his head and looked gravely into her face. 'That's all you'll get,' said she. The dog shook his head again, and tapped his

paw once on the counter, as much as to say, 'I'm not to be done: a penny more, if you please.' 'If you'll not take that, you shall have nothing,' said Mrs. Traill, and she took back the threepence."

"Dear! and what did the dog do then,—snarl or bite?" "Not so; he knew he was in his rights, and did not lower himself by showing bad temper. The dog looked quietly round, saw a basket which contained two or three pounds of candles lying in a corner for the shop boy to take to some customer; took up the basket in his mouth, and turned tail, as much as to say, 'Tit for tat then.' He understood, you see, what is called 'the law of reprisals.' 'Come back this moment,' cried Mrs. Traill. The dog walked out of the shop; then she ran after him, and counted the fourpence before him, on which he dropped the basket, picked up the right change, and went off demurely. 'To whom does that poodle belong?' said I. 'To a poor drunken man,' said Mrs. Traill; 'I wish it was in better hands.' 'So do I, ma'am,' answered I; 'did he teach it?' 'No, it was taught by his brother, who was an old soldier, and died in his house two weeks ago. It knows a great many tricks, and is quite young. It might make a fortune as a show, sir.' So I was thinking. I inquired the owner's address, called on him, and found him disposed to sell the dog. But he asked L3, a sum that seemed out of the question then. Still I kept the dog in my eye; called every day to make friends with it, and ascertain its capacities. And at last, thanks to you, Sophy, I bought the dog; and what is more, as soon as I had two golden sovereigns to show, I got him for that sum, and we have still L1. left (besides small savings from

our lost salaries) to go to the completion of his education, and the advertisement of his merits. I kept this a secret from Merle,—from all. I would not even let the drunken owner know where I took the dog to yesterday. I brought him here, where, I learned in the village, there were two rooms to let, locked him up, and my story is told."

"But why keep it such a secret?"

"Because I don't want Rugge to trace us. He might do one a mischief; because I have a grand project of genteel position and high prices for the exhibition of that dog. And why should it be known where we come from, or what we were? And because, if the owner knew where to find the dog, he might decoy it back from us. Luckily he had not made the dog so fond of him but what, unless it be decoyed, it will accustom itself to us. And now I propose that we should stay a week or so here, and devote ourselves exclusively to developing the native powers of this gifted creature. Get out the dominos."

"What is his name?"

"Ha! that is the first consideration. What shall be his name?"

"Has he not one already?"

"Yes,—trivial and unattractive,—Mop! In private life it might pass.

But in public life—give a dog a bad name and hang him. Mop, indeed!"

Therewith Mop, considering himself appealed to, rose and stretched himself.

"Right," said Gentleman Waife; "stretch yourself—you decidedly require it."

CHAPTER V

Mop becomes a personage.—Much thought is bestowed on the verbal dignities, without which a personage would become a mop.—The importance of names is apparent in all history.—If Augustus had called himself king, Rome would have risen against him as a Tarquin; so he remained a simple equestrian, and modestly called himself Imperator.—Mop chooses his own title in a most mysterious manner, and ceases to be Mop.

"The first noticeable defect in your name of Mop," said Gentleman Waife, "is, as you yourself denote, the want of elongation. Monosyllables are not imposing, and in striking compositions their meaning is elevated by periphrasis; that is to say, Sophy, that what before was a short truth, an elegant author elaborates into a long stretch."

"Certainly," said Sophy, thoughtfully; "I don't think the name of Mop would draw! Still he is very like a mop."

"For that reason the name degrades him the more, and lowers him from an intellectual phenomenon to a physical attribute, which is vulgar. I hope that that dog will enable us to rise in the scale of being. For whereas we in acting could only command a threepenny audience—reserved seats a shilling—he may aspire to half-crowns and dress-boxes; that is, if we can hit on a name which inspires respect. Now, although the dog is big, it is not

by his size that he is to become famous, or we might call him Hercules or Goliath; neither is it by his beauty, or Adonis would not be unsuitable. It is by his superior sagacity and wisdom. And there I am puzzled to find his prototype amongst mortals; for, perhaps, it may be my ignorance of history—"

"You ignorant, indeed, Grandfather!"

"But considering the innumerable millions who have lived on the earth, it is astonishing how few I can call to mind who have left behind them a proverbial renown for wisdom. There is, indeed, Solomon, but he fell off at the last; and as he belongs to sacred history, we must not take a liberty with his name. Who is there very, very wise, besides Solomon? Think, Sophy,—Profane History."

Sophy (after a musing pause).—"Puss in Boots."

"Well, he was wise; but then he was not human; he was a cat. Ha!

Socrates. Shall we call him Socrates, Socrates, Socrates?"

SOPHY.—"Socrates, Socrates!" Mop yawned.

WIFE.—"He don't take to Socrates,—prosy!"

SOPHY.—"Ah, Mr. Merle's book about the Brazen Head, Friar Bacon! He must have been very wise."

WIFE.—"Not bad; mysterious, but not recondite; historical, yet familiar. What does Mop say to it? Friar, Friar, Friar Bacon, sir, —Friar!"

SOPHY (coaxingly).—"Friar!"

Mop, evidently conceiving that appeal is made to some other

personage, canine or human, not present, rouses up, walks to the door, smells at the chink, returns, shakes his head, and rests on his haunches, eying his two friends superciliously.

SOPHY.—"He does not take to that name."

WAIFFE.—"He has his reasons for it; and indeed there are many worthy persons who disapprove of anything that savours of magical practices. Mop intimates that on entering public life one should beware of offending the respectable prejudices of a class."

Mr. Waife then, once more resorting to the recesses of scholastic memory, plucked therefrom, somewhat by the head and shoulders, sundry names revered in a by-gone age. He thought of the seven wise men of Greece, but could only recall the nomenclature of two out of the—even,—a sad proof of the distinction between collegiate fame and popular renown. He called Thales; he called Bion. Mop made no response. "Wonderful intelligence!" said Waife; "he knows that Thales and Bion would not draw!—obsolete."

Mop was equally mute to Aristotle. He pricked up his ears at Plato, perhaps because the sound was not wholly dissimilar from that of Ponto, —a name of which he might have had vague reminiscences. The Romans not having cultivated an original philosophy, though they contrived to produce great men without it, Waife passed by that perished people. He crossed to China, and tried Confucius. Mop had evidently never heard of him.

"I am at the end of my list, so far as the wise men are concerned," said Waife, wiping his forehead. "If Mop were to

distinguish himself by valour, one would find heroes by the dozen,—Achilles, and Hector, and Julius Caesar, and Pompey, and Bonaparte, and Alexander the Great, and the Duke of Marlborough. Or, if he wrote poetry, we could fit him to a hair. But wise men certainly are scarce, and when one has hit on a wise man's name it is so little known to the vulgar that it would carry no more weight with it than Spot or Toby. But necessarily some name the dog must have, and take to sympathetically."

Sophy meanwhile had extracted the dominos from Waife's bundle, and with the dominos an alphabet and a multiplication-table in printed capitals. As the Comedian's one eye rested upon the last, he exclaimed, "But after all, Mop's great strength will probably be in arithmetic, and the science of numbers is the root of all wisdom. Besides, every man, high and low, wants to make a fortune, and associations connected with addition and multiplication are always pleasing. Who, then, is the sage at computation most universally known? Unquestionably Cocker! He must take to that, Cocker, Cocker" (commandingly),—"C-o-c-k-e-r" (with persuasive sweetness).

Mop looked puzzled; he put his head first on one side, then on the other.

SOPHY (with mellifluous endearment).—"Cocker, good Cocker; Cocker dear!"

BOTH.—"Cocker, Cocker, Cocker!"

Excited and bewildered, Mop put up his head, and gave vent to his perplexities in a long and lugubrious howl, to which certainly

none who heard it could have desired addition or multiplication.

"Stop this instant, sir,—stop; I shoot you! You are dead,—down!" Waife adjusted his staff to his shoulder gun-wise; and at the word of command, "Down," Mop was on his side, stiff and lifeless. "Still," said Waife, "a name connected with profound calculation would be the most appropriate; for instance, Sir Isaac —"

Before the Comedian could get out the word Newton, Mop had sprung to his four feet, and, with wagging tail and wriggling back, evinced a sense of beatified recognition.

"Astounding!" said Waife, rather awed. "Can it be the name? Impossible. Sir Isaac, Sir Isaac!"

"Bow-wow!" answered Mop, joyously.

"If there be any truth in the doctrine of metempsychosis," faltered Gentleman Waife, "if the great Newton could have transmigrated into that incomparable animal! Newton, Newton!" To that name Mop made no obeisance, but, evidently still restless, walked round the room, smelling at every corner, and turning to look back with inquisitive earnestness at his new master.

"He does not seem to catch at the name of Newton," said Waife, trying it thrice again, and vainly, "and yet he seems extremely well versed in the principle of gravity. Sir Isaac!" The dog bounded towards him, put his paws on his shoulder, and licked his face. "Just cut out those figures carefully, my dear, and see if we can get him to tell us how much twice ten are—I mean

by addressing him as Sir Isaac."

Sophy cut the figures from the multiplication table, and arranged them, at Waife's instruction, in a circle on the floor. "Now, Sir Isaac." Mop lifted a paw, and walked deliberately round the letters. "Now, Sir Isaac, how much are ten times two?" Mop deliberately made his survey and calculation, and, pausing at twenty, stooped, and took the letters in his mouth.

"It is not natural," cried Sophy, much alarmed. "It must be wicked, and I'd rather have nothing to do with it, please."

"Silly child! He was but obeying my sign. He had been taught that trick already under the name of Mop. The only strange thing is, that he should do it also under the name of Sir Isaac, and much more cheerfully too. However, whether he has been the great Newton or not, a live dog is better than a dead lion. But it is clear that, in acknowledging the name of Sir Isaac, he does not encourage us to take that of Newton; and he is right: for it might be thought unbecoming to apply to an animal, however extraordinary, who by the severity of fortune is compelled to exhibit his talents for a small pecuniary reward, the family name of so great a philosopher. Sir Isaac, after all, is a vague appellation; any dog has a right to be Sir Isaac—Newton may be left conjectural. Let us see if we can add to our arithmetical information. Look at me, Sir Isaac." Sir Isaac looked and grinned affectionately; and under that title learned a new combination with a facility that might have relieved Sophy's mind of all superstitious belief that the philosopher was

resuscitated in the dog, had she known that in life that great master of calculations the most abstruse could not accurately cast up a simple sum in addition. Nothing brought him to the end of his majestic tether like dot and carry one. Notable type of our human incompleteness, where men might deem our studies had made us most complete! Notable type, too, of that grandest order of all human genius which seems to arrive at results by intuition, which a child might pose by a row of figures on a slate, while it is solving the laws that link the stars to infinity! But /revenons a nos moutons/, what was the astral attraction that incontestably bound the reminiscences of Mop to the cognominal distinction of Sir Isaac? I had prepared a very erudite and subtle treatise upon this query, enlivened by quotations from the ancient Mystics,—such as Iamblicus and Proclus,—as well as by a copious reference to the doctrine of the more modern Spiritualists, from Sir Kenelm Digby and Swedenborg, to Monsieur Cahagnet and Judge Edwards. It was to be called Inquiry into the Law of Affinities, by Philomopsos: when, unluckily for my treatise, I arrived at the knowledge of a fact which, though it did not render the treatise less curious, knocked on the head the theory upon which it was based. The baptismal name of the old soldier, Mop's first proprietor and earliest preceptor, was Isaac; and his master being called in the homely household by that Christian name, the sound had entered into Mop's youngest and most endeared associations. His canine affections had done much towards ripening his scholastic education. "Where is Isaac?"

"Call Isaac!" "Fetch Isaac his hat," etc. Stilled was that name when the old soldier died; but when heard again, Mop's heart was moved, and in missing the old master, he felt more at home with the new. As for the title, "Sir," it was a mere expletive in his ears. Such was the fact, and such the deduction to be drawn from it. Not that it will satisfy every one. I know that philosophers who deny all that they have not witnessed, and refuse to witness what they resolve to deny, will reject the story in toto; and will prove, by reference to their own dogs, that a dog never recognizes the name of his master,—never yet could be taught arithmetic. I know also that there are Mystics who will prefer to believe that Mop was in direct spiritual communication with unseen Isaacs, or in a state of clairvoyance, or under the influence of the odic fluid. But did we ever yet find in human reason a question with only one side to it? Is not truth a polygon? Have not sages arisen in our day to deny even the principle of gravity, for which we had been so long contentedly taking the word of the great Sir Isaac? It is that blessed spirit of controversy which keeps the world going; and it is that which, perhaps, explains why Mr. Waife, when his memory was fairly put to it, could remember, out of the history of the myriads who have occupied our planet from the date of Adam to that in which I now write, so very few men whom the world will agree to call wise, and out of that very few so scant a percentage with names sufficiently known to make them more popularly significant of pre-eminent sagacity than if they had been called—Mops.

CHAPTER VI

The vagrant having got his dog, proceeds to hunt fortune with it, leaving behind him a trap to catch rats.—What the trap does catch is "just like his luck."

Sir Isaac, to designate him by his new name, improved much upon acquaintance. He was still in the ductile season of youth, and took to learning as an amusement to himself. His last master, a stupid sot, had not gained his affections; and perhaps even the old soldier, though gratefully remembered and mourned, had not stolen into his innermost heart, as Waife and Sophy gently contrived to do. In short, in a very few days he became perfectly accustomed and extremely attached to them. When Waife had ascertained the extent of his accomplishments, and added somewhat to their range in matters which cost no great trouble, he applied himself to the task of composing a little drama which might bring them all into more interesting play, and in which though Sophy and himself were performers the dog had the premier role. And as soon as this was done, and the dog's performances thus ranged into methodical order and sequence, he resolved to set off to a considerable town at some distance, and to which Mr. Ruge was no visitor.

His bill at the cottage made but slight inroad into his pecuniary resources; for in the intervals of leisure from his instructions to Sir Isaac, Waife had performed various little services to the

lone widow with whom they lodged, which Mrs. Saunders (such was her name) insisted upon regarding as money's worth. He had repaired and regulated to a minute an old clock which had taken no note of time for the last three years; he had mended all the broken crockery by some cement of his own invention, and for which she got him the materials. And here his ingenuity was remarkable, for when there was only a fragment to be found of a cup and a fragment or two of a saucer, he united them both into some pretty form, which, if not useful, at all events looked well on a shelf. He bound, in smart showy papers, sundry tattered old books which had belonged to his landlady's defunct husband, a Scotch gardener, and which she displayed on a side table, under the japan tea-tray. More than all, he was of service to her in her vocation; for Mrs. Saunders eked out a small pension—which she derived from the affectionate providence of her Scotch husband, in insuring his life in her favour—by the rearing and sale of poultry; and Waife saved her the expense of a carpenter by the construction of a new coop, elevated above the reach of the rats, who had hitherto made sad ravage amongst the chickens; while he confided to her certain secrets in the improvement of breed and the cheaper processes of fattening, which excited her gratitude no less than her wonder. "The fact is," said Gentleman Waife, "that my life has known makeshifts. Once, in a foreign country, I kept poultry, upon the principle that the poultry should keep me."

Strange it was to notice such versatility of invention, such

readiness of resource, such familiarity with divers nooks and crannies in the practical experience of life, in a man now so hard put to it for a livelihood. There are persons, however, who might have a good stock of talent, if they did not turn it all into small change. And you, reader, know as well as I do, that when a sovereign or a shilling is once broken into, the change scatters and dispends itself in a way quite unaccountable. Still coppers are useful in household bills; and when Waife was really at a pinch, somehow or other, by hook or by crook, he scraped together intellectual halfpence enough to pay his way.

Mrs. Saunders grew quite fond of her lodgers. Waife she regarded as a prodigy of genius; Sophy was the prettiest and best of children. Sir Isaac, she took for granted, was worthy of his owners. But the Comedian did not confide to her his dog's learning, nor the use to which he designed to put it. And in still greater precaution, when he took his leave, he extracted from Mrs. Saunders a solemn promise that she would set no one on his track in case of impertinent inquiries.

"You see before you," said he, "a man who has enemies, such as rats are to your chickens: chickens despise rats when raised, as yours are now, above the reach of claws and teeth. Some day or other I may so raise a coop for that little one: I am too old for coops. Meanwhile, if a rat comes sneaking here after us, send it off the wrong way, with a flea in its ear."

Mrs. Saunders promised, between tears and laughter; blessed Waife, kissed Sophy, patted Sir Isaac, and stood long at her

threshold watching the three, as the early sun lit their forms receding in the narrow green lane,—dewdrops sparkling on the hedgerows, and the skylark springing upward from the young corn.

Then she slowly turned indoors, and her home seemed very solitary. We can accustom ourselves to loneliness, but we should beware of infringing the custom. Once admit two or three faces seated at your hearthside, or gazing out from your windows on the laughing sun, and when they are gone, they carry off the glow from your grate and the sunbeam from your panes. Poor Mrs. Saunders! in vain she sought to rouse herself, to put the rooms to rights, to attend to the chickens to distract her thoughts. The one-eyed cripple, the little girl, the shaggy-faced dog, still haunted her; and when at noon she dined all alone off the remnants of the last night's social supper, the very click of the renovated clock seemed to say, "Gone, gone;" and muttering, "Ah! gone," she reclined back on her chair, and indulged herself in a good womanlike cry. From this luxury she was startled by a knock at the door. "Could they have come back?" No; the door opened, and a genteel young man, in a black coat and white neckcloth, stepped in.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am—your name 's Saunders—sell poultry?"

"At your service, sir. Spring chickens?" Poor people, whatever their grief, must sell their chickens, if they have any to sell.

"Thank you, ma'am; not at this moment. The fact is, that I call

to make some inquiries Have not you lodgers here?"

Lodgers! at that word the expanding soul of Mrs. Saunders reclosed hermetically; the last warning of Waife revibrated in her ears this white neckclothed gentleman, was he not a rat?

"No, sir, I ha'n't no lodgers."

"But you have had some lately, eh? a crippled elderly man and a little girl."

"Don't know anything about them; leastways," said Mrs. Saunders, suddenly remembering that she was told less to deny facts than to send inquirers upon wrong directions," leastways, at this blessed time. Pray, sir, what makes you ask?"

"Why, I was instructed to come down to ——, and find out where this person, one William Waife, had gone. Arrived yesterday, ma'am. All I could hear is, that a person answering to his description left the place several days ago, and had been seen by a boy, who was tending sheep, to come down the lane to your house, and you were supposed to have lodgers (you take lodgers sometimes, I think, ma'am), because you had been buying some trifling articles of food not in your usual way of custom. Circumstantial evidence, ma'am: you can have no motive to conceal the truth."

"I should think not indeed, sir," retorted Mrs. Saunders, whom the ominous words "circumstantial evidence" set doubly on her guard. "I did see a gentleman such as you mention, and a pretty young lady, about ten days agone, or so, and they did lodge here a night or two, but they are gone to—"

"Yes, ma'am,—gone where?"

"Lunnon."

"Really—very likely. By the train or on foot?"

"On foot, I s'pose."

"Thank you, ma'am. If you should see them again, or hear where they are, oblige me by conveying this card to Mr. Waife. My employer, ma'am, Mr. Gotobed, Craven Street, Strand,—eminent solicitor. He has something of importance to communciate to Mr. Waife."

"Yes, sir,—a lawyer; I understand." And as of all ratlike animals in the world Mrs. Saunders had the ignorance to deem a lawyer was the most emphatically devouring, she congratulated herself with her whole heart on the white lies she had told in favour of the intended victims.

The black-coated gentleman having thus obeyed his instructions and attained his object, nodded, went his way, and regained the fly which he had left at the turnstile. "Back to the inn," cried he, "quick: I must be in time for the three o'clock train to London."

And thus terminated the result of the great barrister's first instructions to his eminent solicitor to discover a lame man and a little girl. No inquiry, on the whole, could have been more skilfully conducted. Mr. Gotobed sends his head clerk; the head clerk employs the policeman of the village; gets upon the right track; comes to the right house; and is altogether in the wrong,—in a manner highly creditable to his researches.

"In London, of course: all people of that kind come back to London," said Mr. Gotobed. "Give me the heads in writing, that I may report to my distinguished client. Most satisfactory. That young man will push his way,—businesslike and methodical."

CHAPTER VII

The cloud has its silver lining.

Thus turning his back on the good fortune which he had so carefully cautioned Mrs. Saunders against favouring on his behalf, the vagrant was now on his way to the ancient municipal town of Gatesboro', which, being the nearest place of fitting opulence and population, Mr. Waife had resolved to honour with the debut of Sir Isaac as soon as he had appropriated to himself the services of that promising quadruped. He had consulted a map of the county before quitting Mr. Merle's roof, and ascertained that he could reach Gatesboro' by a short cut for foot-travellers along fields and lanes. He was always glad to avoid the high road: doubtless for such avoidance he had good reasons. But prudential reasons were in this instance supported by vagrant inclinations. High roads are for the prosperous. By-paths and ill-luck go together. But by-paths have their charm, and ill-luck its pleasant moments.

They passed then from the high road into a long succession of green pastures, through which a straight public path conducted them into one of those charming lanes never seen out of this bowery England,—a lane deep sunk amidst high banks with overhanging oaks, and quivering ash, gnarled wych-elm, vivid holly and shaggy brambles, with wild convolvulus and creeping

woodbine forcing sweet life through all. Sometimes the banks opened abruptly, leaving patches of green sward, and peeps through still sequestered gates, or over moss-grown pales, into the park or paddock of some rural thane. New villas or old manor-houses on lawny uplands, knitting, as it were, together England's feudal memories with England's freeborn hopes,—the old land with its young people; for England is so old, and the English are so young! And the gray cripple and the bright-haired child often paused, and gazed upon the demesnes and homes of owners whose lots were cast in such pleasant places. But there was no grudging envy in their gaze; perhaps because their life was too remote from those grand belongings. And therefore they could enjoy and possess every banquet of the eye. For at least the beauty of what we see is ours for the moment, on the simple condition that we do not covet the thing which gives to our eyes that beauty. As the measureless sky and the unnumbered stars are equally granted to king and to beggar; and in our wildest ambition we do not sigh for a monopoly of the empyrean, or the fee-simple of the planets: so the earth too, with all its fenced gardens and embattled walls, all its landmarks of stern property and churlish ownership, is ours too by right of eye. Ours to gaze on the fair possessions with such delight as the gaze can give; grudging to the unseen owner his other, and, it may be, more troubled rights, as little as we grudge an astral proprietor his acres of light in Capricorn. Benignant is the law that saith, "Thou shalt not covet."

When the sun was at the highest our wayfarers found a

shadowy nook for their rest and repast. Before them ran a shallow limpid trout-stream; on the other side its margin, low grassy meadows, a farmhouse in the distance, backed by a still grove, from which rose a still church tower and its still spire. Behind them, a close-shaven sloping lawn terminated the hedgerow of the lane; seen clearly above it, with parterres of flowers on the sward, drooping lilacs and laburnums farther back, and a pervading fragrance from the brief-lived and rich syringas. The cripple had climbed over a wooden rail that separated the lane from the rill, and seated himself under the shade of a fantastic hollow thorn-tree. Sophy, reclined beside him, was gathering some pale scentless violets from a mound which the brambles had guarded from the sun. The dog had descended to the waters to quench his thirst, but still stood knee-deep in the shallow stream, and appeared lost in philosophical contemplation of a swarm of minnows, which his immersion had disturbed, but which now made itself again visible on the farther side of the glassy brook, undulating round and round a tiny rocklet which interrupted the glide of the waves, and caused them to break into a low melodious murmur. "For these and all thy mercies, O Lord, make us thankful," said the victim of ill-luck, in the tritest words of a pious custom. But never, perhaps, at aldermanic feasts was the grace more sincerely said.

And then he untied the bundle, which the dog, who had hitherto carried it by the way, had now carefully deposited at his side. "As I live," ejaculated Waife, "Mrs. Saunders is a woman

in ten thousand. See, Sophy, not contented with the bread and cheese to which I bade her stint her beneficence, a whole chicken,—a little cake too for you, Sophy; she has not even forgotten the salt. Sophy, that woman deserves the handsomest token of our gratitude; and we will present her with a silver teapot the first moment we can afford it."

His spirits exhilarated by the unexpected good cheer, the Comedian gave way to his naturally blithe humour; and between every mouthful he rattled or rather drolled on, now infant-like, now sage-like. He cast out the rays of his liberal humour, careless where they fell,—on the child, on the dog, on the fishes that played beneath the wave, on the cricket that chirped amidst the grass; the woodpecker tapped the tree, and the cripple's merry voice answered it in bird-like mimicry. To this riot of genial babble there was a listener, of whom neither grandfather nor grandchild was aware. Concealed by thick brushwood a few paces farther on, a young angler, who might be five or six and twenty, had seated himself, just before the arrival of our vagrant to those banks and waters, for the purpose of changing an unsuccessful fly. At the sound of voices, perhaps suspecting an unlicensed rival, for that part of the stream was preserved,—he had suspended his task, and noiselessly put aside the clustering leaves to reconnoitre. The piety of Waife's simple grace seemed to surprise him pleasingly, for a sweet approving smile crossed his lips. He continued to look and to listen. He forgot the fly, and a trout sailed him by unheeded. But Sir Isaac,

having probably satisfied his speculative mind as to the natural attributes of minnows, now slowly reascended the bank, and after a brief halt and a sniff, walked majestically towards the hidden observer, looked at him with great solemnity, and uttered an inquisitive bark,—a bark not hostile, not menacing; purely and dryly interrogative. Thus detected, the angler rose; and Waife, whose attention was directed that way by the bark, saw him, called to Sir Isaac, and said politely, "There is no harm in my dog, sir."

The young man muttered some inaudible reply, and, lifting up his rod as in sign of his occupation or excuse for his vicinity, came out from the intervening foliage, and stepped quietly to Waife's side. Sir Isaac followed him, sniffed again, seemed satisfied; and seating himself on his haunches, fixed his attention upon the remains of the chicken which lay defenceless on the grass. The new comer was evidently of the rank of gentleman; his figure was slim and graceful, his face pale, meditative, refined. He would have impressed you at once with the idea of what he really was,—an Oxford scholar; and you would perhaps have guessed him designed for the ministry of the Church, if not actually in orders.

CHAPTER VIII

Mr. Waife excites the admiration, and benignly pities the infirmity, of an Oxford scholar.

"You are str-str-strangers?" said the Oxonian, after a violent exertion to express himself, caused by an impediment in his speech.

WAIFFE.—"Yes, sir, travellers. I trust we are not trespassing: this is not private ground, I think?"

OXONIAN.—"And if-f-f-f—it were, my f-f-father would not war-n-n you off-ff—f."

"Is it your father's ground, then? Sir, I beg you a thousand pardons."

The apology was made in the Comedian's grandest style: it imposed greatly on the young scholar. Waife might have been a duke in disguise; but I will do the angler the justice to say that such discovery of rank would have impressed him little more in the vagrant's favour. It had been that impromptu "grace"—that thanksgiving which the scholar felt was for something more than the carnal food—which had first commanded his respect and wakened his interest. Then that innocent careless talk—part uttered to dog and child, part soliloquized, part thrown out to the ears of the lively teeming Nature—had touched a somewhat kindred chord in the angler's soul; for he was somewhat of a poet and much of a soliloquist, and could confer with Nature, nor

feel that impediment in speech which obstructed his intercourse with men. Having thus far indicated that oral defect in our new acquaintance, the reader will cheerfully excuse me for not enforcing it over much. Let it be among the things /subaudita/, as the sense of it gave to a gifted and aspiring nature, thwarted in the sublime career of Preacher, an exquisite mournful pain. And I no more like to raise a laugh at his infirmity behind his back, than I should before his pale, powerful, melancholy face; therefore I suppress the infirmity in giving the reply.

OXONIAN.—" On the other side the lane, where the garden slopes downward, is my father's house. This ground is his property certainly, but he puts it to its best use, in lending it to those who so piously acknowledge that Father from whom all good comes. Your child, I presume, sir?"

"My grandchild."

"She seems delicate: I hope you have not far to go?"

"Not very far, thank you, sir. But my little girl looks more delicate than she is. You are not tired, darling?"

"Oh, not at all!" There was no mistaking the looks of real love interchanged between the old man and the child; the scholar felt much interested and somewhat puzzled.

"Who and what could they be? so unlike foot wayfarers!" On the other hand, too, Waife took a liking to the courteous young man, and conceived a sincere pity for his physical affliction. But he did not for those reasons depart from the discreet caution he had prescribed to himself in seeking new fortunes and shunning

old perils, so he turned the subject.

"You are an angler, sir? I suppose the trout in the stream run small?"

"Not very: a little higher up I have caught them at four pounds weight."

WAIFFE.—"There goes a fine fish yonder,—see! balancing himself between those weeds."

OXONIAN.—"Poor fellow, let him be safe to-day. After all, it is a cruel sport, and I should break myself of it. But it is strange that whatever our love for Nature we always seek some excuse for trusting ourselves alone to her. A gun, a rod, a sketch-book, a geologist's hammer, an entomologist's net, a something."

WAIFFE.—"Is it not because all our ideas would run wild if not concentrated on a definite pursuit? Fortune and Nature are earnest females, though popular beauties; and they do not look upon coquettish triflers in the light of genuine wooers."

The Oxonian, who, in venting his previous remark, had thought it likely he should be above his listener's comprehension, looked surprised. What pursuits, too, had this one-eyed philosopher?

"You have a definite pursuit, sir?"

"I—alas! when a man moralizes, it is a sign that he has known error: it is because I have been a trifler that I rail against triflers. And talking of that, time flies, and we must be off and away."

Sophy re-tied the bundle. Sir Isaac, on whom, meanwhile, she had bestowed the remains of the chicken, jumped up and

described a circle.

"I wish you success in your pursuit, whatever it be," stammered out the angler.

"And I no less heartily, sir, wish you success in yours."

"Mine! Success there is beyond my power."

"How, sir? Does it rest so much with others?"

"No, my failure is in myself. My career should be the Church, my pursuit the cure of souls, and—and—this pitiful infirmity! How can I speak the Divine Word—I—I—a stammerer!"

The young man did not pause for an answer, but plunged through the brushwood that bespread the banks of the rill, and his hurried path could be traced by the wave of the foliage through which he forced his way.

"We all have our burdens," said Gentleman Waife, as Sir Isaac took up the bundle and stalked on, placid and refreshed.

CHAPTER IX

The nomad, entering into civilized life, adopts its arts, shaves his poodle, and puts on a black coat.—Hints at the process by which a Cast-off exalts himself into a Take-in.

At twilight they stopped at a quiet inn within eight miles of Gatesboro'. Sophy, much tired, was glad to creep to bed. Waife sat up long after her; and, in preparation for the eventful morrow, washed and shaved Sir Isaac. You would not have known the dog again; he was dazzling. Not Ulysses, rejuvenated by Pallas Athene, could have been more changed for the better. His flanks revealed a skin most daintily mottled; his tail became leonine, with an imperial tuft; his mane fell in long curls like the beard of a Ninevite king; his boots were those of a courtier in the reign of Charles II.; his eyes looked forth in dark splendour from locks white as the driven snow. This feat performed, Waife slept the sleep of the righteous, and Sir Isaac, stretched on the floor beside the bed, licked his mottled flanks and shivered: "/il faut souffrir pour etre beau/." Much marvelling, Sophy the next morning beheld the dog; but, before she was up, Waife had paid the bill and was waiting for her on the road, impatient to start. He did not heed her exclamation, half compassionate, half admiring; he was absorbed in thought. Thus they proceeded slowly on till within two miles of the town, and then Waife turned aside, entered a wood, and there, with the aid of Sophy, put the dog upon a

deliberate rehearsal of the anticipated drama. The dog was not in good spirits, but he went through his part with mechanical accuracy, though slight enthusiasm.

"He is to be relied upon, in spite of his French origin," said Waife. "All national prejudice fades before the sense of a common interest. And we shall always find more genuine solidity of character in a French poodle than in an English mastiff, whenever a poodle is of use to us and the mastiff is not. But oh, waste of care! oh, sacrifice of time to empty names! oh, emblem of fashionable education! It never struck me before,—does it not, child though thou art, strike thee now,—by the necessities of our drama, this animal must be a French dog?"

"Well, Grandfather?"

"And we have given him an English name! Precious result of our own scholastic training, taught at preparatory academies precisely that which avails us naught when we are to face the world! What is to be done? Unlearn him his own cognomen,—teach him another name,—too late, too late. We cannot afford the delay."

"I don't see why he should be called any name at all. He observes your signs just as well without."

"If I had but discovered that at the beginning. Pity! Such a fine name too. Sir Isaac! /Vanitas vanitatum!/ What desire chiefly kindles the ambitious? To create a name, perhaps bequeath a title,—exalt into Sir Isaacs a progeny of slops! And, after all, it is possible (let us hope it in this instance) that a sensible

young dog may learn his letters and shoulder his musket just as well, though all the appellations by which humanity knows him be condensed into a pitiful monosyllable. Nevertheless (as you will find when you are older), people are obliged in practice to renounce for themselves the application of those rules which they philosophically prescribe for others. Thus, while I grant that a change of name for that dog is a question belonging to the policy of *If*s and *But*s, commonly called the policy of Expediency, about which one may differ from others and one's own self every quarter of an hour, a change of name for me belongs to the policy of *Must* and *Shall*; namely the policy of Necessity, against which let no dog bark,—though I have known dogs howl at it! William Waife is no more: he is dead; he is buried; and even Juliet Araminta is the baseless fabric of a vision."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.