

BENJAMIN DISRAELI

SYBIL, OR, THE
TWO NATIONS

Benjamin Disraeli
Sybil, Or, The Two Nations

«Public Domain»

Disraeli B.

Sybil, Or, The Two Nations / B. Disraeli — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

BOOK I	5
Book 1 Chapter 1	5
Book 1 Chapter 2	8
Book 1 Chapter 3	10
Book 1 Chapter 4	19
Book 1 Chapter 5	21
Book 1 Chapter 6	25
BOOK II	28
Book 2 Chapter 1	28
Book 2 Chapter 2	32
Book 2 Chapter 3	34
Book 2 Chapter 4	37
Book 2 Chapter 5	40
Book 2 Chapter 6	44
Book 2 Chapter 7	49
Book 2 Chapter 8	52
Book 2 Chapter 9	55
Book 2 Chapter 10	58
Book 2 Chapter 11	64
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	65

Earl of Beaconsfield Benjamin Disraeli

Sybil, Or, The Two Nations

BOOK I

Book 1 Chapter 1

“I’ll take the odds against Caravan.”

“In poneys?”

“Done.”

And Lord Milford, a young noble, entered in his book the bet which he had just made with Mr Latour, a grey headed member of the Jockey Club.

It was the eve of the Derby of 1837. In a vast and golden saloon, that in its decorations would have become, and in its splendour would not have disgraced, Versailles in the days of the grand monarch, were assembled many whose hearts beat at the thought of the morrow, and whose brains still laboured to control its fortunes to their advantage.

“They say that Caravan looks puffy,” lisped in a low voice a young man, lounging on the edge of a buhl table that had once belonged to a Mortemart, and dangling a rich cane with affected indifference in order to conceal his anxiety from all, except the person whom he addressed.

“They are taking seven to two against him freely over the way,” was the reply. “I believe it’s all right.”

“Do you know I dreamed last night something about Mango,” continued the gentleman with the cane, and with a look of uneasy superstition.

His companion shook his head.

“Well,” continued the gentleman with the cane, “I have no opinion of him. I gave Charles Egremont the odds against Mango this morning; he goes with us, you know. By the bye, who is our fourth?”

“I thought of Milford,” was the reply in an under tone. “What say you?”

“Milford is going with St James and Punch Hughes.”

“Well, let us come into supper, and we shall see some fellow we like.”

So saying, the companions, taking their course through more than one chamber, entered an apartment of less dimensions than the principal saloon, but not less sumptuous in its general appearance. The gleaming lustres poured a flood of soft yet brilliant light over a plateau glittering with gold plate, and fragrant with exotics embedded in vases of rare porcelain. The seats on each side of the table were occupied by persons consuming, with a heedless air, delicacies for which they had no appetite; while the conversation in general consisted of flying phrases referring to the impending event of the great day that had already dawned.

“Come from Lady St Julian’s, Fitz?” said a youth of very tender years, and whose fair visage was as downy and as blooming as the peach from which with a languid air he withdrew his lips to make this inquiry of the gentleman with the cane.

“Yes; why were not you there?”

“I never go anywhere,” replied the melancholy Cupid, “everything bores me so.”

“Well, will you go to Epsom with us to-morrow, Alfred?” said Lord Fitzheron. “I take Berners and Charles Egremont, and with you our party will be perfect.”

“I feel so cursed blase!” exclaimed the boy in a tone of elegant anguish.

“It will give you a fillip, Alfred,” said Mr Berners; “do you all the good in the world.”

“Nothing can do me good,” said Alfred, throwing away his almost untasted peach, “I should be quite content if anything could do me harm. Waiter, bring me a tumbler of Badminton.”

“And bring me one too,” sighed out Lord Eugene De Vere, who was a year older than Alfred Mountchesney, his companion and brother in listlessness. Both had exhausted life in their teens, and all that remained for them was to mourn, amid the ruins of their reminiscences, over the extinction of excitement.

“Well, Eugene, suppose you come with us.” said Lord Fitzheron.

“I think I shall go down to Hampton Court and play tennis,” said Lord Eugene. “As it is the Derby, nobody will be there.”

“And I will go with you, Eugene,” said Alfred Mountchesney, “and we will dine together afterwards at the Toy. Anything is better than dining in this infernal London.”

“Well, for my part,” said Mr Berners. “I do not like your suburban dinners. You always get something you can’t eat, and cursed bad wine.”

“I rather like bad wine,” said Mr Mountchesney; “one gets so bored with good wine.”

“Do you want the odds against Hybiscus, Berners?” said a guardsman looking up from his book, which he had been very intently studying.

“All I want is some supper, and as you are not using your place—”

“You shall have it. Oh! here’s Milford, he will give them me.”

And at this moment entered the room the young nobleman whom we have before mentioned, accompanied by an individual who was approaching perhaps the termination of his fifth lustre but whose general air rather betokened even a less experienced time of life. Tall, with a well-proportioned figure and a graceful carriage, his countenance touched with a sensibility that at once engages the affections. Charles Egremont was not only admired by that sex, whose approval generally secures men enemies among their fellows, but was at the same time the favourite of his own.

“Ah, Egremont! come and sit here,” exclaimed more than one banqueter.

“I saw you waltzing with the little Bertie, old fellow,” said Lord Fitzheron, “and therefore did not stay to speak to you, as I thought we should meet here. I am to call for you, mind.”

“How shall we all feel this time to-morrow?” said Egremont, smiling.

“The happiest fellow at this moment must be Cockie Graves,” said Lord Milford. “He can have no suspense. I have been looking over his book, and I defy him, whatever happens, not to lose.”

“Poor Cockie.” said Mr Berners; “he has asked me to dine with him at the Clarendon on Saturday.”

“Cockie is a very good Cockie,” said Lord Milford, “and Caravan is a very good horse; and if any gentleman sportsman present wishes to give seven to two, I will take him to any amount.”

“My book is made up,” said Egremont; “and I stand or fall by Caravan.”

“And I.”

“And I.”

“And I.”

“Well, mark my words,” said a fourth, rather solemnly, “Rat-trap wins.”

“There is not a horse except Caravan,” said Lord Milford, “fit for a borough stake.”

“You used to be all for Phosphorus, Egremont,” said Lord Eugene de Vere.

“Yes; but fortunately I have got out of that scrape. I owe Phip Dormer a good turn for that. I was the third man who knew he had gone lame.”

“And what are the odds against him now.”

“Oh! nominal; forty to one,—what you please.”

“He won’t run,” said Mr Berners, “John Day told me he had refused to ride him.”

“I believe Cockie Graves might win something if Phosphorus came in first,” said Lord Milford, laughing.

“How close it is to-night!” said Egremont. “Waiter, give me some Seltzer water; and open another window; open them all.”

At this moment an influx of guests intimated that the assembly at Lady St Julian’s was broken up. Many at the table rose and yielded their places, clustering round the chimney-piece, or forming in various groups, and discussing the great question. Several of those who had recently entered were votaries of Rat-trap, the favourite, and quite prepared, from all the information that had reached them, to back their opinions valiantly. The conversation had now become general and animated, or rather there was a medley of voices in which little was distinguished except the names of horses and the amount of odds. In the midst of all this, waiters glided about handing incomprehensible mixtures bearing aristocratic names; mystical combinations of French wines and German waters, flavoured with slices of Portugal fruits, and cooled with lumps of American ice, compositions which immortalized the creative genius of some high patrician name.

“By Jove! that’s a flash,” exclaimed Lord Milford, as a blaze of lightning seemed to suffuse the chamber, and the beaming lustres turned white and ghastly in the glare.

The thunder rolled over the building. There was a dead silence. Was it going to rain? Was it going to pour? Was the storm confined to the metropolis? Would it reach Epsom? A deluge, and the course would be a quagmire, and strength might baffle speed.

Another flash, another explosion, the hissing noise of rain. Lord Milford moved aside, and jealous of the eye of another, read a letter from Chifney, and in a few minutes afterwards offered to take the odds against Pocket Hercules. Mr Latour walked to the window, surveyed the heavens, sighed that there was not time to send his tiger from the door to Epsom, and get information whether the storm had reached the Surrey hills, for to-night’s operations. It was too late. So he took a rusk and a glass of lemonade, and retired to rest with a cool head and a cooler heart.

The storm raged, the incessant flash played as it were round the burnished cornice of the chamber, and threw a lurid hue on the scenes of Watteau and Boucher that sparkled in the medallions over the lofty doors. The thunderbolts seemed to descend in clattering confusion upon the roof. Sometimes there was a moment of dead silence, broken only by the pattering of the rain in the street without, or the pattering of the dice in a chamber at hand. Then horses were backed, bets made, and there were loud and frequent calls for brimming goblets from hurrying waiters, distracted by the lightning and deafened by the peal. It seemed a scene and a supper where the marble guest of Juan might have been expected, and had he arrived, he would have found probably hearts as bold and spirits as reckless as he encountered in Andalusia.

Book 1 Chapter 2

“Will any one do anything about Hybiscus?” sang out a gentleman in the ring at Epsom. It was full of eager groups; round the betting post a swarming cluster, while the magic circle itself was surrounded by a host of horsemen shouting from their saddles the odds they were ready to receive or give, and the names of the horses they were prepared to back or to oppose.

“Will any one do anything about Hybiscus?”

“I’ll give you five to one,” said a tall, stiff Saxon peer, in a white great coat.

“No; I’ll take six.”

The tall, stiff peer in the white great coat mused for a moment with his pencil at his lip, and then said, “Well, I’ll give you six. What do you say about Mango?”

“Eleven to two against Mango,” called out a little humpbacked man in a shrill voice, but with the air of one who was master of his work.

“I should like to do a little business with you, Mr Chippendale,” said Lord Milford in a coaxing tone, “but I must have six to one.”

“Eleven to two, and no mistake,” said this keeper of a second-rate gaming-house, who, known by the flattering appellation of Hump Chippendale, now turned with malignant abruptness from the heir apparent of an English earldom.

“You shall have six to one, my Lord,” said Captain Spruce, a debonair personage with a well-turned silk hat arranged a little aside, his coloured cravat tied with precision, his whiskers trimmed like a quickset hedge. Spruce, who had earned his title of Captain on the plains of Newmarket, which had witnessed for many a year his successful exploits, had a weakness for the aristocracy, who knowing his graceful infirmity patronized him with condescending dexterity, acknowledged his existence in Pall Mall as well as at Tattersalls, and thus occasionally got a point more than the betting out of him. Hump Chippendale had none of these gentle failings; he was a democratic leg, who loved to fleece a noble, and thought all men were born equal—a consoling creed that was a hedge for his hump.

“Seven to four against the favourite; seven to two against Caravan; eleven to two against Mango. What about Benedict? Will any one do anything about Pocket Hercules? Thirty to one against Dardanelles.”

“Done.”

“Five and thirty ponies to one against Phosphorus,” shouted a little man vociferously and repeatedly.

“I will give forty,” said Lord Milford. No answer,—nothing done.

“Forty to one!” murmured Egremont who stood against Phosphorus. A little nervous, he said to the peer in the white great coat, “Don’t you think that Phosphorus may after all have some chance?”

“I should be cursed sorry to be deep against him,” said the peer.

Egremont with a quivering lip walked away. He consulted his book; he meditated anxiously. Should he hedge? It was scarcely worth while to mar the symmetry of his winnings; he stood “so well” by all the favourites; and for a horse at forty to one. No; he would trust his star, he would not hedge.

“Mr Chippendale,” whispered the peer in the white great coat, “go and press Mr Egremont about Phosphorus. I should not be surprised if you got a good thing.”

At this moment, a huge, broad-faced, rosy-gilled fellow, with one of those good-humoured yet cunning countenances that we meet occasionally on the northern side of the Trent, rode up to the ring on a square cob and dismounting entered the circle. He was a carcase butcher, famous in Carnaby market, and the prime councillor of a distinguished nobleman for whom privately he betted on commission. His secret service to-day was to bet against his noble employer’s own horse, and so he at once sung out, “Twenty to one against Man-trap.”

A young gentleman just launched into the world, and who, proud of his ancient and spreading acres, was now making his first book, seeing Man-trap marked eighteen to one on the cards, jumped eagerly at this bargain, while Lord Fitzheron and Mr Berners who were at hand and who in their days had found their names in the book of the carcase butcher, and grown wise by it, interchanged a smile.

“Mr Egremont will not take,” said Hump Chippendale to the peer in the white great coat.

“You must have been too eager,” said his noble friend.

The ring is up; the last odds declared; all gallop away to the Warren. A few minutes, only a few minutes, and the event that for twelve months has been the pivot of so much calculation, of such subtle combinations, of such deep conspiracies, round which the thought and passion of the sporting world have hung like eagles, will be recorded in the fleeting tablets of the past. But what minutes! Count them by sensation and not by calendars, and each moment is a day and the race a life. Hogarth in a coarse and yet animated sketch has painted “Before” and “After.” A creative spirit of a higher vein might develop the simplicity of the idea with sublimer accessories. Pompeius before Pharsalia, Harold before Hastings, Napoleon before Waterloo, might afford some striking contrasts to the immediate catastrophe of their fortunes. Finer still the inspired mariner who has just discovered a new world; the sage who has revealed a new planet; and yet the “Before” and “After” of a first-rate English race, in the degree of its excitement, and sometimes in the tragic emotions of its close, may vie even with these.

They are saddling the horses; Caravan looks in great condition; and a scornful smile seems to play upon the handsome features of Pavis, as in the becoming colours of his employer, he gracefully gallops his horse before his admiring supporters. Egremont in the delight of an English patrician scarcely saw Mango, and never even thought of Phosphorus—Phosphorus, who, by the bye, was the first horse that showed, with both his forelegs bandaged.

They are off!

As soon as they are well away, Chifney makes the running with Pocket Hercules. Up to the Rubbing House he is leading; this is the only point the eye can select. Higher up the hill, Caravan, Hybiscus, Benedict, Mahometan, Phosphorus, Michel Fell, and Rat-trap are with the grey, forming a front rank, and at the new ground the pace has told its tale, for half a dozen are already out of the race.

The summit is gained; the tactics alter: here Pavis brings up Caravan, with extraordinary severity,—the pace round Tattenham corner terrific; Caravan leading, then Phosphorus a little above him, Mahometan next, Hybiscus fourth. Rat-trap looking badly, Wisdom, Benedict and another handy. By this time Pocket Hercules has enough, and at the road the tailing grows at every stride. Here the favourite himself is hors de combat, as well as Dardanelles, and a crowd of lesser celebrities.

There are now but four left in the race, and of these, two, Hybiscus and Mahometan, are some lengths behind. Now it is neck and neck between Caravan and Phosphorus. At the stand Caravan has decidedly the best, but just at the post, Edwards, on Phosphorus, lifts the gallant little horse, and with an extraordinary effort contrives to shove him in by half a length.

“You look a little low, Charley,” said Lord Fitzheron, as taking their lunch in their drag he poured the champagne into the glass of Egremont.

“By Jove!” said Lord Milford, “Only think of Cockie Graves having gone and done it!”

Book 1 Chapter 3

Egremont was the younger brother of an English earl, whose nobility being of nearly three centuries' date, ranked him among our high and ancient peers, although its origin was more memorable than illustrious. The founder of the family had been a confidential domestic of one of the favourites of Henry the Eighth, and had contrived to be appointed one of the commissioners for "visiting and taking the surrenders of divers religious houses." It came to pass that divers of these religious houses surrendered themselves eventually to the use and benefit of honest Baldwin Greymount. The king was touched with the activity and zeal of his commissioner. Not one of them whose reports were so ample and satisfactory, who could baffle a wily prior with more dexterity, or control a proud abbot with more firmness. Nor were they well-digested reports alone that were transmitted to the sovereign: they came accompanied with many rare and curious articles, grateful to the taste of one who was not only a religious reformer but a dilettante; golden candlesticks and costly chalices; sometimes a jewelled pix; fantastic spoons and patens, rings for the fingers and the ear; occasionally a fair-written and blazoned manuscript—suitable offering to the royal scholar. Greymount was noticed; sent for; promoted in the household; knighted; might doubtless have been sworn of the council, and in due time have become a minister; but his was a discreet ambition—of an accumulative rather than an aspiring character. He served the king faithfully in all domestic matters that required an unimpassioned, unscrupulous agent; fashioned his creed and conscience according to the royal model in all its freaks; seized the right moment to get sundry grants of abbey lands, and contrived in that dangerous age to save both his head and his estate.

The Greymount family having planted themselves in the land, faithful to the policy of the founder, avoided the public gaze during the troubled period that followed the reformation; and even during the more orderly reign of Elizabeth, rather sought their increase in alliances than in court favour. But at the commencement of the seventeenth century, their abbey lands infinitely advanced in value, and their rental swollen by the prudent accumulation of more than seventy years, a Greymount, who was then a county member, was elevated to the peerage as Baron Marney. The heralds furnished his pedigree, and assured the world that although the exalted rank and extensive possessions enjoyed at present by the Greymounts, had their origin immediately in great territorial revolutions of a recent reign, it was not for a moment to be supposed, that the remote ancestors of the Ecclesiastical Commissioner of 1530 were by any means obscure. On the contrary, it appeared that they were both Norman and baronial, their real name Egremont, which, in their patent of peerage the family now resumed.

In the civil wars, the Egremonts pricked by their Norman blood, were cavaliers and fought pretty well. But in 1688, alarmed at the prevalent impression that King James intended to insist on the restitution of the church estates to their original purposes, to wit, the education of the people and the maintenance of the poor, the Lord of Marney Abbey became a warm adherent of "civil and religious liberty,"—the cause for which Hampden had died in the field, and Russell on the scaffold,—and joined the other whig lords, and great lay impropiators, in calling over the Prince of Orange and a Dutch army, to vindicate those popular principles which, somehow or other, the people would never support. Profiting by this last pregnant circumstance, the lay Abbot of Marney also in this instance like the other whig lords, was careful to maintain, while he vindicated the cause of civil and religious liberty, a very loyal and dutiful though secret correspondence with the court of St Germain's.

The great deliverer King William the Third, to whom Lord Marney was a systematic traitor, made the descendant of the Ecclesiastical Commissioner of Henry the Eighth an English earl; and from that time until the period of our history, though the Marney family had never produced one individual eminent for civil or military abilities, though the country was not indebted to them for a single statesman, orator, successful warrior, great lawyer, learned divine, eminent author, illustrious

man of science, they had contrived, if not to engross any great share of public admiration and love, at least to monopolise no contemptible portion of public money and public dignities. During the seventy years of almost unbroken whig rule, from the accession of the House of Hanover to the fall of Mr Fox, Marney Abbey had furnished a never-failing crop of lord privy seals, lord presidents, and lord lieutenants. The family had had their due quota of garters and governments and bishoprics; admirals without fleets, and generals who fought only in America. They had glittered in great embassies with clever secretaries at their elbow, and had once governed Ireland when to govern Ireland was only to apportion the public plunder to a corrupt senate.

Notwithstanding however this prolonged enjoyment of undeserved prosperity, the lay abbots of Marney were not content. Not that it was satiety that induced dissatisfaction. The Egremonts could feed on. They wanted something more. Not to be prime ministers or secretaries of state, for they were a shrewd race who knew the length of their tether, and notwithstanding the encouraging example of his grace of Newcastle, they could not resist the persuasion that some knowledge of the interests and resources of nations, some power of expressing opinions with propriety, some degree of respect for the public and for himself, were not altogether indispensable qualifications, even under a Venetian constitution, in an individual who aspired to a post so eminent and responsible. Satisfied with the stars and mitres and official seals, which were periodically apportioned to them, the Marney family did not aspire to the somewhat graceless office of being their distributor. What they aimed at was promotion in their order; and promotion to the highest class. They observed that more than one of the other great “civil and religious liberty” families,—the families who in one century plundered the church to gain the property of the people, and in another century changed the dynasty to gain the power of the crown,—had their brows circled with the strawberry leaf. And why should not this distinction be the high lot also of the descendants of the old gentleman usher of one of King Henry’s plundering vicar-generals? Why not? True it is, that a grateful sovereign in our days has deemed such distinction the only reward for half a hundred victories. True it is, that Nelson, after conquering the Mediterranean, died only a Viscount! But the house of Marney had risen to high rank; counted themselves ancient nobility; and turned up their noses at the Pratts and the Smiths, the Jenkinsons and the Robinsons of our degenerate days; and never had done anything for the nation or for their honours. And why should they now? It was unreasonable to expect it. Civil and religious liberty, that had given them a broad estate and a glittering coronet, to say nothing of half-a-dozen close seats in parliament, ought clearly to make them dukes.

But the other great whig families who had obtained this honour, and who had done something more for it than spoliage their church and betray their king, set up their backs against this claim of the Egremonts. The Egremonts had done none of the work of the last hundred years of political mystification, during which a people without power or education, had been induced to believe themselves the freest and most enlightened nation in the world, and had submitted to lavish their blood and treasure, to see their industry crippled and their labour mortgaged, in order to maintain an oligarchy, that had neither ancient memories to soften nor present services to justify their unprecedented usurpation.

How had the Egremonts contributed to this prodigious result? Their family had furnished none of those artful orators whose bewildering phrase had fascinated the public intelligence; none of those toilsome patricians whose assiduity in affairs had convinced their unprivileged fellow-subjects that government was a science, and administration an art, which demanded the devotion of a peculiar class in the state for their fulfilment and pursuit. The Egremonts had never said anything that was remembered, or done anything that could be recalled. It was decided by the Great Revolution families, that they should not be dukes. Infinite was the indignation of the lay Abbot of Marney. He counted his boroughs, consulted his cousins, and muttered revenge. The opportunity soon offered for the gratification of his passion.

The situation of the Venetian party in the wane of the eighteenth century had become extremely critical. A young king was making often fruitless, but always energetic, struggles to emancipate his national royalty from the trammels of the factious dogeship. More than sixty years of a government of singular corruption had alienated all hearts from the oligarchy; never indeed much affected by the great body of the people. It could no longer be concealed, that by virtue of a plausible phrase power had been transferred from the crown to a parliament, the members of which were appointed by an extremely limited and exclusive class, who owned no responsibility to the country, who debated and voted in secret, and who were regularly paid by the small knot of great families that by this machinery had secured the permanent possession of the king's treasury. Whiggism was putrescent in the nostrils of the nation; we were probably on the eve of a bloodless yet important revolution; when Rockingham, a virtuous magnifico, alarmed and disgusted, resolved to revive something of the pristine purity and high-toned energy of the old whig connection; appealed to his "new generation" from a degenerate age, arrayed under his banner the generous youth of the whig families, and was fortunate to enlist in the service the supreme genius of Edmund Burke.

Burke effected for the whigs what Bolingbroke in a preceding age had done for the tories: he restored the moral existence of the party. He taught them to recur to the ancient principles of their connection, and suffused those principles with all the delusive splendour of his imagination. He raised the tone of their public discourse; he breathed a high spirit into their public acts. It was in his power to do more for the whigs than St John could do for his party. The oligarchy, who had found it convenient to attain Bolingbroke for being the avowed minister of the English Prince with whom they were always in secret communication, when opinion forced them to consent to his restitution, had tacked to the amnesty a clause as cowardly as it was unconstitutional, and declared his incompetence to sit in the parliament of his country. Burke on the contrary fought the whig fight with a two-edged weapon: he was a great writer; as an orator he was transcendent. In a dearth of that public talent for the possession of which the whigs have generally been distinguished, Burke came forward and established them alike in the parliament and the country. And what was his reward? No sooner had a young and dissolute noble, who with some of the aspirations of a Caesar oftener realised the conduct of a Catiline, appeared on the stage, and after some inglorious tergiversation adopted their colours, than they transferred to him the command which had been won by wisdom and genius, vindicated by unrivalled knowledge, and adorned by accomplished eloquence. When the hour arrived for the triumph which he had prepared, he was not even admitted into the Cabinet, virtually presided over by his graceless pupil, and who, in the profuse suggestions of his teeming converse, had found the principles and the information which were among the chief claims to public confidence of Mr Fox.

Hard necessity made Mr Burke submit to the yoke, but the humiliation could never be forgotten. Nemesis favours genius: the inevitable hour at length arrived. A voice like the Apocalypse sounded over England and even echoed in all the courts of Europe. Burke poured forth the vials of his hoarded vengeance into the agitated heart of Christendom; he stimulated the panic of a world by the wild pictures of his inspired imagination; he dashed to the ground the rival who had robbed him of his hard-earned greatness; rended in twain the proud oligarchy that had dared to use and to insult him; and followed with servility by the haughtiest and the most timid of its members, amid the frantic exultation of his country, he placed his heel upon the neck of the ancient serpent.

Among the whig followers of Mr Burke in this memorable defection, among the Devonshires and the Portlands, the Spencers and the Fitzwilliams, was the Earl of Marney, whom the whigs would not make a duke.

What was his chance of success from Mr Pitt?

If the history of England be ever written by one who has the knowledge and the courage, and both qualities are equally requisite for the undertaking, the world would be more astonished than when reading the Roman annals by Niebuhr. Generally speaking, all the great events have been distorted, most of the important causes concealed, some of the principal characters never appear, and all who

figure are so misunderstood and misrepresented, that the result is a complete mystification, and the perusal of the narrative about as profitable to an Englishman as reading the Republic of Plato or the Utopia of More, the pages of Gaudentio di Lucca or the adventures of Peter Wilkins.

The influence of races in our early ages, of the church in our middle, and of parties in our modern history, are three great moving and modifying powers, that must be pursued and analyzed with an untiring, profound, and unimpassioned spirit, before a guiding ray can be secured. A remarkable feature of our written history is the absence in its pages of some of the most influential personages. Not one man in a thousand for instance has ever heard of Major Wildman: yet he was the soul of English politics in the most eventful period of this kingdom, and one most interesting to this age, from 1640 to 1688; and seemed more than once to hold the balance which was to decide the permanent form of our government. But he was the leader of an unsuccessful party. Even, comparatively speaking, in our own times, the same mysterious oblivion is sometimes encouraged to creep over personages of great social distinction as well as political importance.

The name of the second Pitt remains, fresh after forty years of great events, a parliamentary beacon. He was the Chatterton of politics; the “marvellous boy.” Some have a vague impression that he was mysteriously moulded by his great father: that he inherited the genius, the eloquence, the state craft of Chatham. His genius was of a different bent, his eloquence of a different class, his state craft of a different school. To understand Mr Pitt, one must understand one of the suppressed characters of English history, and that is Lord Shelburne.

When the fine genius of the injured Bolingbroke, the only peer of his century who was educated, and proscribed by the oligarchy because they were afraid of his eloquence, “the glory of his order and the shame,” shut out from Parliament, found vent in those writings which recalled to the English people the inherent blessings of their old free monarchy, and painted in immortal hues his picture of a patriot king, the spirit that he raised at length touched the heart of Carteret, born a whig, yet sceptical of the advantages of that patrician constitution which made the Duke of Newcastle, the most incompetent of men, but the chosen leader of the Venetian party, virtually sovereign of England. Lord Carteret had many brilliant qualities: he was undaunted, enterprising, eloquent; had considerable knowledge of continental politics, was a great linguist, a master of public law; and though he failed in his premature effort to terminate the dogship of George the Second, he succeeded in maintaining a considerable though secondary position in public life. The young Shelburne married his daughter. Of him it is singular we know less than of his father-in-law, yet from the scattered traits some idea may be formed of the ablest and most accomplished minister of the eighteenth century. Lord Shelburne, influenced probably by the example and the traditionary precepts of his eminent father-in-law, appears early to have held himself aloof from the patrician connection, and entered public life as the follower of Bute in the first great effort of George the Third to rescue the sovereignty from what Lord Chatham called “the Great Revolution families.” He became in time a member of Lord Chatham’s last administration: one of the strangest and most unsuccessful efforts to aid the grandson of George the Second in his struggle for political emancipation. Lord Shelburne adopted from the first the Bolingbroke system: a real royalty, in lieu of the chief magistracy; a permanent alliance with France, instead of the whig scheme of viewing in that power the natural enemy of England: and, above all, a plan of commercial freedom, the germ of which may be found in the long-maligned negotiations of Utrecht, but which in the instance of Lord Shelburne were soon in time matured by all the economical science of Europe, in which he was a proficient. Lord Shelburne seems to have been of a reserved and somewhat astute disposition: deep and adroit, he was however brave and firm. His knowledge was extensive and even profound. He was a great linguist; he pursued both literary and scientific investigations; his house was frequented by men of letters, especially those distinguished by their political abilities or economical attainments. He maintained the most extensive private correspondence of any public man of his time. The earliest and most authentic information reached him from all courts and quarters of Europe: and it was a common phrase, that the minister of

the day sent to him often for the important information which the cabinet could not itself command. Lord Shelburne was the first great minister who comprehended the rising importance of the middle class; and foresaw in its future power a bulwark for the throne against “the Great Revolution families.” Of his qualities in council we have no record; there is reason to believe that his administrative ability was conspicuous: his speeches prove that, if not supreme, he was eminent, in the art of parliamentary disputation, while they show on all the questions discussed a richness and variety of information with which the speeches of no statesman of that age except Mr Burke can compare.

Such was the man selected by George the Third as his champion against the Venetian party after the termination of the American war. The prosecution of that war they had violently opposed, though it had originated in their own policy. First minister in the House of Lords, Shelburne entrusted the lead in the House of Commons to his Chancellor of the Exchequer, the youthful Pitt. The administration was brief, but it was not inglorious. It obtained peace, and for the first time since the Revolution introduced into modern debate the legitimate principles on which commerce should be conducted. It fell before the famous Coalition with which “the Great Revolution families” commenced their fiercest and their last contention for the patrician government of royal England.

In the heat of that great strife, the king in the second hazardous exercise of his prerogative entrusted the perilous command to Pitt. Why Lord Shelburne on that occasion was set aside, will perhaps always remain a mysterious passage of our political history, nor have we space on the present occasion to attempt to penetrate its motives. Perhaps the monarch, with a sense of the rising sympathies of his people, was prescient of the magic power of youth in touching the heart of a nation. Yet it would not be an unprofitable speculation if for a moment we paused to consider what might have been the consequences to our country if Mr Pitt had been content for a season again to lead the Commons under Lord Shelburne, and have secured for England the unrivalled knowledge and dexterity of that statesman in the conduct of our affairs during the confounding fortunes of the French revolution. Lord Shelburne was the only English minister competent to the task; he was the only public man who had the previous knowledge requisite to form accurate conclusions on such a conjuncture: his remaining speeches on the subject attest the amplitude of his knowledge and the accuracy of his views: and in the rout of Jena, or the agony of Austerlitz, one cannot refrain from picturing the shade of Shelburne haunting the cabinet of Pitt, as the ghost of Canning is said occasionally to linger about the speaker’s chair, and smile sarcastically on the conscientious mediocrities who pilfered his hard-earned honours.

But during the happier years of Mr Pitt, the influence of the mind of Shelburne may be traced throughout his policy. It was Lansdowne House that made Pitt acquainted with Dr Price, a dissenting minister, whom Lord Shelburne when at the head of affairs courageously offered to make his private secretary, and who furnished Mr Pitt, among many other important suggestions, with his original plan of the sinking fund. The commercial treaties of ‘87 were struck in the same mint, and are notable as the first effort made by the English government to emancipate the country from the restrictive policy which had been introduced by the “glorious revolution;” memorable epoch, that presented England at the same time with a corn law and a public debt. But on no subject was the magnetic influence of the descendant of Sir William Petty more decided, than in the resolution of his pupil to curb the power of the patrician party by an infusion from the middle classes into the government of the country. Hence the origin of Mr Pitt’s famous and long-misconceived plans of parliamentary reform. Was he sincere, is often asked by those who neither seek to discover the causes nor are capable of calculating the effects of public transactions. Sincere! Why, he was struggling for his existence! And when baffled, first by the Venetian party, and afterwards by the panic of Jacobinism, he was forced to forego his direct purpose, he still endeavoured partially to effect it by a circuitous process. He created a plebeian aristocracy and blended it with the patrician oligarchy. He made peers of second-rate squires and fat graziers. He caught them in the alleys of Lombard Street, and clutched them from the counting-houses of Cornhill. When Mr Pitt in an age of bank restriction declared that every man with an estate

of ten thousand a-year had a right to be a peer, he sounded the knell of “the cause for which Hampden had died on the field, and Sydney on the scaffold.”

In ordinary times the pupil of Shelburne would have raised this country to a state of great material prosperity, and removed or avoided many of those anomalies which now perplex us; but he was not destined for ordinary times; and though his capacity was vast and his spirit lofty, he had not that passionate and creative genius required by an age of revolution. The French outbreak was his evil daemon: he had not the means of calculating its effects upon Europe. He had but a meagre knowledge himself of continental politics: he was assisted by a very inefficient diplomacy. His mind was lost in a convulsion of which he neither could comprehend the causes nor calculate the consequences; and forced to act, he acted not only violently, but in exact opposition to the very system he was called into political existence to combat; he appealed to the fears, the prejudices, and the passions of a privileged class, revived the old policy of the oligarchy he had extinguished, and plunged into all the ruinous excesses of French war and Dutch finance.

If it be a salutary principle in the investigation of historical transactions to be careful in discriminating the cause from the pretext, there is scarcely any instance in which the application of this principle is more fertile in results, than in that of the Dutch invasion of 1688. The real cause of this invasion was financial. The Prince of Orange had found that the resources of Holland, however considerable, were inadequate to sustain him in his internecine rivalry with the great sovereign of France. In an authentic conversation which has descended to us, held by William at the Hague with one of the prime abettors of the invasion, the prince did not disguise his motives; he said, “nothing but such a constitution as you have in England can have the credit that is necessary to raise such sums as a great war requires.” The prince came, and used our constitution for his purpose: he introduced into England the system of Dutch finance. The principle of that system was to mortgage industry in order to protect property: abstractedly, nothing can be conceived more unjust; its practice in England has been equally injurious. In Holland, with a small population engaged in the same pursuits, in fact a nation of bankers, the system was adapted to the circumstances which had created it. All shared in the present spoil, and therefore could endure the future burthen. And so to this day Holland is sustained, almost solely sustained, by the vast capital thus created which still lingers amongst its dykes. But applied to a country in which the circumstances were entirely different; to a considerable and rapidly-increasing population; where there was a numerous peasantry, a trading middle class struggling into existence; the system of Dutch finance, pursued more or less for nearly a century and a half, has ended in the degradation of a fettered and burthened multitude. Nor have the demoralizing consequences of the funding system on the more favoured classes been less decided. It has made debt a national habit; it has made credit the ruling power, not the exceptional auxiliary, of all transactions; it has introduced a loose, inexact, haphazard, and dishonest spirit in the conduct of both public and private life; a spirit dazzling and yet dastardly: reckless of consequences and yet shrinking from responsibility. And in the end, it has so overstimulated the energies of the population to maintain the material engagements of the state, and of society at large, that the moral condition of the people has been entirely lost sight of.

A mortgaged aristocracy, a gambling foreign commerce, a home trade founded on a morbid competition, and a degraded people; these are great evils, but ought perhaps cheerfully to be encountered for the greater blessings of civil and religious liberty. Yet the first would seem in some degree to depend upon our Saxon mode of trial by our peers, upon the stipulations of the great Norman charters, upon the practice and the statute of Habeas Corpus,—a principle native to our common law, but established by the Stuarts; nor in a careful perusal of the Bill of Rights, or in an impartial scrutiny of the subsequent legislation of those times, though some diminution of our political franchises must be confessed, is it easy to discover any increase of our civil privileges. To those indeed who believe that the English nation,—at all times a religious and Catholic people, but who even in the days of the Plantagenets were anti-papal,—were in any danger of again falling under the yoke of the Pope of Rome in the reign of James the Second, religious liberty was perhaps acceptable, though it took

the shape of a discipline which at once anathematized a great portion of the nation, and virtually establishing Puritanism in Ireland, laid the foundation of those mischiefs which are now endangering the empire.

That the last of the Stuarts had any other object in his impolitic manoeuvres, than an impracticable scheme to blend the two churches, there is now authority to disbelieve. He certainly was guilty of the offence of sending an envoy openly to Rome, who, by the bye, was received by the Pope with great discourtesy; and her Majesty Queen Victoria, whose Protestantism cannot be doubted, for it is one of her chief titles to our homage, has at this time a secret envoy at the same court: and that is the difference between them: both ministers doubtless working however fruitlessly for the same object: the termination of those terrible misconceptions, political and religious, that have occasioned so many martyrdoms, and so many crimes alike to sovereigns and to subjects.

If James the Second had really attempted to re-establish Popery in this country, the English people, who had no hand in his overthrow, would doubtless soon have stirred and secured their “Catholic and Apostolic church,” independent of any foreign dictation; the church to which they still regularly profess their adherence; and being a practical people, it is possible that they might have achieved their object and yet retained their native princes; under which circumstances we might have been saved from the triple blessings of Venetian politics, Dutch finance, and French wars: against which, in their happiest days, and with their happiest powers, struggled the three greatest of English statesmen,—Bolingbroke, Shelburne, and lastly the son of Chatham.

We have endeavoured in another work, not we hope without something of the impartiality of the future, to sketch the character and career of his successors. From his death to 1825, the political history of England is a history of great events and little men. The rise of Mr Canning, long kept down by the plebeian aristocracy of Mr Pitt as an adventurer, had shaken parties to their centre. His rapid disappearance from the scene left both whigs and tories in a state of disorganization. The distinctive principles of these connexions were now difficult to trace. That period of public languor which intervenes between the breaking up of parties and the formation of factions now transpired in England. An exhausted sensualist on the throne, who only demanded from his ministers repose, a voluptuous aristocracy, and a listless people, were content, in the absence of all public conviction and national passion, to consign the government of the country to a great man, whose decision relieved the sovereign, whose prejudices pleased the nobles, and whose achievements dazzled the multitude.

The DUKE OF WELLINGTON brought to the post of first minister immortal fame; a quality of success which would almost seem to include all others. His public knowledge was such as might be expected from one whose conduct already formed an important portion of the history of his country. He had a personal and intimate acquaintance with the sovereigns and chief statesmen of Europe, a kind of information in which English ministers have generally been deficient, but without which the management of our external affairs must at the best be haphazard. He possessed administrative talents of the highest order.

The tone of the age, the temper of the country, the great qualities and the high character of the minister, indicated a long and prosperous administration. The only individual in his cabinet who, from a combination of circumstances rather than from any intellectual supremacy over his colleagues, was competent to be his rival, was content to be his successor. In his most aspiring moments, Mr Peel in all probability aimed at no higher reach; and with youth and the leadership of the House of Commons, one has no reason to be surprised at his moderation. The conviction that the duke’s government would only cease with the termination of his public career was so general, that the moment he was installed in office, the whigs smiled on him; political conciliation became the slang of the day, and the fusion of parties the babble of clubs and the tattle of boudoirs.

How comes it then that so great a man, in so great a position, should have so signally failed? Should have broken up his government, wrecked his party, and so completely annihilated his political

position, that, even with his historical reputation to sustain him, he can since only re-appear in the councils of his sovereign in a subordinate, not to say equivocal, character?

With all those great qualities which will secure him a place in our history not perhaps inferior even to Marlborough, the Duke of Wellington has one deficiency which has been the stumbling-block of his civil career. Bishop Burnet, in speculating on the extraordinary influence of Lord Shaftesbury, and accounting how a statesman, so inconsistent in his conduct and so false to his confederates, should have so powerfully controlled his country, observes, "HIS STRENGTH LAY IN HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLAND."

Now that is exactly the kind of knowledge which the Duke of Wellington never possessed.

When the king, finding that in Lord Goderich he had a minister who, instead of deciding, asked his royal master for advice, sent for the Duke of Wellington to undertake the government, a change in the carriage of his grace was perceived by some who had the opportunity to form an opinion on such a subject. If one might venture to use such a word in reference to such a man, we might remark, that the duke had been somewhat daunted by the selection of Mr Canning. It disappointed great hopes, it baffled great plans, and dispelled for a season the conviction that, it is believed, had been long maturing in his grace's mind; that he was the man of the age, that his military career had been only a preparation for a civil course not less illustrious; and that it was reserved for him to control for the rest of his life undisputed the destinies of a country, which was indebted to him in no slight degree for its European pre-eminence. The death of Mr Canning revived, the rout of Lord Goderich restored, these views.

Napoleon, at St Helena, speculating in conversation on the future career of his conqueror, asked, "What will Wellington do? After all he has done, he will not be content to be quiet. He will change the dynasty."

Had the great exile been better acquainted with the real character of our Venetian constitution, he would have known that to govern England in 1820, it was not necessary to change its dynasty. But the Emperor, though wrong in the main, was right by the bye. It was clear that the energies that had twice entered Paris as a conqueror, and had made kings and mediatised princes at Vienna, would not be content to subside into ermined insignificance. The duke commenced his political tactics early. The cabinet of Lord Liverpool, especially during its latter term, was the hot-bed of many intrigues; but the obstacles were numerous, though the appointing fate, in which his grace believed, removed them. The disappearance of Lord Castlereagh and Mr Canning from the scene was alike unexpected. The Duke of Wellington was at length prime minister, and no individual ever occupied that post more conscious of its power, and more determined to exercise it.

This is not the occasion on which we shall attempt to do justice to a theme so instructive as the administration of his grace. Treated with impartiality and sufficient information, it would be an invaluable contribution to the stores of our political knowledge and national experience. Throughout its brief but eccentric and tumultuous annals we see continual proof, how important is that knowledge "in which lay Lord Shaftesbury's strength." In twenty-four months we find an aristocracy estranged, without a people being conciliated; while on two several occasions, first, the prejudices, and then the pretensions of the middle class, were alike treated with contumely. The public was astonished at hearing of statesmen of long parliamentary fame, men round whom the intelligence of the nation had gathered for years with confidence, or at least with interest, being expelled from the cabinet in a manner not unworthy of Colonel Joyce, while their places were filled by second-rate soldiers, whose very names were unknown to the great body of the people, and who under no circumstances should have aspired beyond the government of a colony. This administration which commenced in arrogance ended in panic. There was an interval of perplexity; when occurred the most ludicrous instance extant of an attempt at coalition; subordinates were promoted, while negotiations were still pending with their chiefs; and these negotiations, undertaken so crudely, were terminated in pique; in a manner which added to political disappointment personal offence. When even his parasites began to look

gloomy, the duke had a specific that was to restore all, and having allowed every element of power to escape his grasp, he believed he could balance everything by a beer bill. The growl of reform was heard but it was not very fierce. There was yet time to save himself. His grace precipitated a revolution which might have been delayed for half a century, and never need have occurred in so aggravated a form. He rather fled than retired. He commenced his ministry like Brennus, and finished it like the tall Gaul sent to murder the rival of Sylla, but who dropped his weapon before the undaunted gaze of his intended victim.

Lord Marney was spared the pang of the catastrophe. Promoted to a high office in the household, and still hoping that, by the aid of his party, it was yet destined for him to achieve the hereditary purpose of his family, he died in the full faith of dukism; worshipping the duke and believing that ultimately he should himself become a duke. It was under all the circumstances an euthanasia; he expired leaning as it were on his white wand and babbling of strawberry leaves.

Book 1 Chapter 4

“My dear Charles,” said Lady Marney to Egremont the morning after the Derby, as breakfasting with her in her boudoir he detailed some of the circumstances of the race, “we must forget your naughty horse. I sent you a little note this morning, because I wished to see you most particularly before you went out. Affairs,” continued Lady Marney, first looking round the chamber to see whether there were any fairy listening to her state secrets, “affairs are critical.”

“No doubt of that,” thought Egremont, the horrid phantom of settling-day seeming to obtrude itself between his mother and himself; but not knowing precisely at what she was driving, he merely sipped his tea, and innocently replied, “Why?”

“There will be a dissolution,” said Lady Marney.

“What are we coming in?”

Lady Marney shook her head.

“The present men will not better their majority,” said Egremont.

“I hope not,” said Lady Marney.

“Why you always said, that with another general election we must come in, whoever dissolved.”

“But that was with the court in our favour,” rejoined Lady Marney mournfully.

“What, has the king changed?” said Egremont. “I thought it was all right.”

“All was right,” said Lady Marney. “These men would have been turned out again, had he only lived three months more.”

“Lived!” exclaimed Egremont.

“Yes,” said Lady Marney; “the king is dying.”

Slowly delivering himself of an ejaculation, Egremont leant back in his chair.

“He may live a month,” said Lady Marney; “he cannot live two. It is the greatest of secrets; known at this moment only to four individuals, and I communicate it to you, my dear Charles, in that absolute confidence which I hope will always subsist between us, because it is an event that may greatly affect your career.”

“How so, my dear mother?”

“Marbury! I have settled with Mr Tadpole that you shall stand for the old borough. With the government in our hands, as I had anticipated at the general election, success I think was certain: under the circumstances which we must encounter, the struggle will be more severe, but I think we shall do it: and it will be a happy day for me to have our own again, and to see you in Parliament, my dear child.”

“Well, my dear mother, I should like very much to be in Parliament, and particularly to sit for the old borough; but I fear the contest will be very expensive,” said Egremont inquiringly.

“Oh! I have no doubt,” said Lady Marney, “that we shall have some monster of the middle class, some tinker or tailor, or candlestick-maker, with his long purse, preaching reform and practising corruption: exactly as the liberals did under Walpole: bribery was unknown in the time of the Stuarts; but we have a capital registration, Mr Tadpole tells me. And a young candidate with the old name will tell,” said Lady Marney, with a smile: “and I shall go down and canvass, and we must do what we can.”

“I have great faith in your canvassing,” said Egremont; “but still, at the same time, the powder and shot—”

“Are essential,” said Lady Marney, “I know it, in these corrupt days: but Marney will of course supply those. It is the least he can do: regaining the family influence, and letting us hold up our heads again. I shall write to him the moment I am justified,” said Lady Marney, “perhaps you will do so yourself, Charles.”

“Why, considering I have not seen my brother for two years, and we did not part on the best possible terms—”

“But that is all forgotten.”

“By your good offices, dear mother, who are always doing good: and yet,” continued Egremont, after a moment’s pause, “I am not disposed to write to Marney, especially to ask a favour.”

“Well, I will write,” said Lady Marney; “though I cannot admit it is any favour. Perhaps it would be better that you should see him first. I cannot understand why he keeps so at the Abbey. I am sure I found it a melancholy place enough in my time. I wish you had gone down there, Charles, if it had been only for a few days.”

“Well I did not, my dear mother, and I cannot go now. I shall trust to you. But are you quite sure that the king is going to die?”

“I repeat to you, it is certain,” replied Lady Marney, in a lowered voice, but a decided tone; “certain, certain, certain. My authority cannot be mistaken: but no consideration in the world must throw you off your guard at this moment; breathe not the shadow of what you know.”

At this moment a servant entered and delivered a note to Lady Marney, who read it with an ironical smile. It was from Lady St Julians, and ran thus:—

“Most confidential.

“My dearest Lady Marney,

“It is a false report: he is ill, but not dangerously; the hay fever; he always has it; nothing more: I will tell my authority when we meet; I dare not write it. It will satisfy you. I am going on with my quadrille.

“Most affectionately yours,

“A. St J.”

“Poor woman! she is always wrong,” said Lady Marney throwing the note to Egremont. “Her quadrille will never take place, which is a pity, as it is to consist only of beauties and eldest sons. I suppose I must send her a line,” and she wrote:

“My dearest Lady St Julians,

“How good of you to write to me, and send me such cheering news! I have no doubt you are right: you always are: I know he had the hay fever last year. How fortunate for your quadrille, and how charming it will be! Let me know if you hear anything further from your unmentionable quarter.

“Ever your affectionate

“C.M.”

Book 1 Chapter 5

Lord Marney left several children; his heir was five years older than the next son Charles who at the period of his father's death was at Christchurch and had just entered the last year of his minority. Attaining that age, he received the sum of fifteen thousand pounds, his portion, a third of which amount his expenditure had then already anticipated. Egremont had been brought up in the enjoyment of every comfort and every luxury that refinement could devise and wealth furnish. He was a favourite child. His parents emulated each other in pampering and indulging him. Every freak was pardoned, every whim was gratified. He might ride what horses he liked, and if he broke their knees, what in another would have been deemed a flagrant sin, was in him held only a proof of reckless spirit. If he were not a thoroughly selfish and altogether wilful person, but very much the reverse, it was not the fault of his parents, but rather the operation of a benignant nature that had bestowed on him a generous spirit and a tender heart, though accompanied with a dangerous susceptibility that made him the child and creature of impulse, and seemed to set at defiance even the course of time to engraft on his nature any quality of prudence. The tone of Eton during the days of Charles Egremont was not of the high character which at present distinguishes that community. It was the unforeseen eve of the great change, that, whatever was its purpose or have been its immediate results, at least gave the first shock to the pseudo-aristocracy of this country. Then all was blooming; sunshine and odour; not a breeze disturbing the meridian splendour. Then the world was not only made for a few, but a very few. One could almost tell upon one's fingers the happy families who could do anything, and might have everything. A school-boy's ideas of the Church then were fat-livings, and of the State, rotten-boroughs. To do nothing and get something, formed a boy's ideal of a manly career. There was nothing in the lot, little in the temperament, of Charles Egremont, to make him an exception to the multitude. Gaily and securely he floated on the brilliant stream. Popular at school, idolized at home, the present had no cares, and the future secured him a family seat in Parliament the moment he entered life, and the inheritance of a glittering post at court in due time, as its legitimate consequence. Enjoyment, not ambition, seemed the principle of his existence. The contingency of a mitre, the certainty of rich preferment, would not reconcile him to the self-sacrifice which, to a certain degree, was required from a priest, even in those days of rampant Erastianism. He left the colonies as the spoil of his younger brothers; his own ideas of a profession being limited to a barrack in a London park, varied by visits to Windsor. But there was time enough to think of these things. He had to enjoy Oxford as he had enjoyed Eton. Here his allowance from his father was extravagant, though greatly increased by tithes from his mother's pin-money. While he was pursuing his studies, hunting and boating, driving tandems, riding matches, tempering his energies in the crapulence of boyish banquets, and anticipating life, at the risk of expulsion, in a miserable mimicry of metropolitan dissipation, Dukism, that was supposed to be eternal, suddenly crashed.

The Reform Act has not placed the administration of our affairs in abler hands than conducted them previously to the passing of the measure, for the most efficient members of the present cabinet with some very few exceptions, and those attended by peculiar circumstances, were ministers before the Reform Act was contemplated. Nor has that memorable statute created a Parliament of a higher reputation for public qualities, such as politic ability, and popular eloquence, and national consideration, than was furnished by the old scheme. On the contrary; one house of Parliament has been irremediably degraded into the decaying position of a mere court of registry, possessing great privileges, on condition that it never exercises them; while the other chamber that, at the first blush, and to the superficial, exhibits symptoms of almost unnatural vitality, engrossing in its orbit all the business of the country, assumes on a more studious inspection somewhat of the character of a select vestry, fulfilling municipal rather than imperial offices, and beleaguered by critical and clamorous millions, who cannot comprehend why a privileged and exclusive senate is required to

perform functions which immediately concern all, which most personally comprehend, and which many in their civic spheres believe they could accomplish in a manner not less satisfactory, though certainly less ostentatious.

But if it have not furnished us with abler administrators or a more illustrious senate, the Reform Act may have exercised on the country at large a beneficial influence. Has it? Has it elevated the tone of the public mind? Has it cultured the popular sensibilities to noble and ennobling ends? Has it proposed to the people of England a higher test of national respect and confidence than the debasing qualification universally prevalent in this country since the fatal introduction of the system of Dutch finance? Who will pretend it? If a spirit of rapacious coveteousness, desecrating all the humanities of life, has been the besetting sin of England for the last century and a half, since the passing of the Reform Act the altar of Mammon has blazed with triple worship. To acquire, to accumulate, to plunder each other by virtue of philosophic phrases, to propose an Utopia to consist only of WEALTH and TOIL, this has been the breathless business of enfranchised England for the last twelve years, until we are startled from our voracious strife by the wail of intolerable serfage.

Are we then to conclude, that the only effect of the Reform Act has been to create in this country another of those class interests, which we now so loudly accuse as the obstacles to general amelioration? Not exactly that. The indirect influence of the Reform Act has been not inconsiderable, and may eventually lead to vast consequences. It set men a-thinking; it enlarged the horizon of political experience; it led the public mind to ponder somewhat on the circumstances of our national history; to pry into the beginnings of some social anomalies which they found were not so ancient as they had been led to believe, and which had their origin in causes very different to what they had been educated to credit; and insensibly it created and prepared a popular intelligence to which one can appeal, no longer hopelessly, in an attempt to dispel the mysteries with which for nearly three centuries it has been the labour of party writers to involve a national history, and without the dispersion of which no political position can be understood and no social evil remedied.

The events of 1830 did not produce any change in the modes of thought and life of Charles Egremont. He took his political cue from his mother, who was his constant correspondent. Lady Marney was a distinguished “stateswoman,” as they called Lady Carlisle in Charles the First’s time, a great friend of Lady St Julians, and one of the most eminent and impassioned votaries of Dukism. Her first impression on the overthrow of her hero was, astonishment at the impertinence of his adversaries, mingled with some lofty pity for their silly ambition and short-lived career. She existed for a week in the delightful expectation of his grace being sent for again, and informed every one in confidence, that “these people could not form a cabinet.” When the tocsin of peace, reform, and retrenchment sounded, she smiled bitterly; was sorry for poor Lord Grey of whom she had thought better, and gave them a year, adding with consoling malice, “that it would be another Canning affair.” At length came the Reform Bill itself, and no one laughed more heartily than Lady Marney; not even the House of Commons to whom it was presented.

The bill was thrown out, and Lady Marney gave a grand ball to celebrate the event, and to compensate the London shopkeepers for the loss of their projected franchise. Lady Marney was preparing to resume her duties at court when to her great surprise the firing of cannon announced the dissolution of Parliament. She turned pale; she was too much in the secrets of Tadpole and Taper to be deceived as to the consequences; she sank into her chair, and denounced Lord Grey as a traitor to his order.

Lady Marney who for six months had been writing to her son at Oxford the most charming letters, full of fun, quizzing the whole Cabinet, now announced to Egremont that a revolution was inevitable, that all property would be instantly confiscated, the poor deluded king led to the block or sent over to Hanover at the best, and the whole of the nobility and principal gentry, and indeed every one who possessed anything, guillotined without remorse.

Whether his friends were immediately to resume power, or whether their estates ultimately were to be confiscated, the practical conclusion to Charles Egremont appeared to be the same. *Carpe diem*. He therefore pursued his career at Oxford unchanged, and entered life in the year 1833, a younger son with extravagant tastes and expensive habits, with a reputation for lively talents though uncultivated,—for his acquisitions at Eton had been quite puerile, and subsequently he had not become a student,—with many manly accomplishments, and with a mien and visage that at once took the fancy and enlisted the affections. Indeed a physiologist would hardly have inferred from the countenance and structure of Egremont the career he had pursued, or the character which attached to him. The general cast and expression of his features when in repose was pensive: an air of refinement distinguished his well-moulded brow; his mouth breathed sympathy, and his rich brown eye gleamed with tenderness. The sweetness of his voice in speaking was in harmony with this organization.

Two years passed in the most refined circles of our society exercised a beneficial influence on the general tone of Egremont, and may be said to have finished his education. He had the good sense and the good taste not to permit his predilection for sports to degenerate into slang; he yielded himself to the delicate and profitable authority of woman, and, as ever happens, it softened his manners and brightened his wit. He was fortunate in having a clever mother, and he appreciated this inestimable possession. Lady Marney had great knowledge of society, and some acquaintance with human nature, which she fancied she had fathomed to its centre; she piqued herself upon her tact, and indeed she was very quick, but she was so energetic that her art did not always conceal itself; very worldly, she was nevertheless not devoid of impulse; she was animated and would have been extremely agreeable, if she had not restlessly aspired to wit; and would certainly have exercised much more influence in society, if she had not been so anxious to show it. Nevertheless, still with many personal charms, a frank and yet, if need be, a finished manner, a quick brain, a lively tongue, a buoyant spirit, and a great social position. Lady Marney was universally and extremely popular; and adored by her children, for indeed she was a mother most affectionate and true.

When Egremont was four-and-twenty, he fell in love—a real passion. He had fluttered like others from flower to flower, and like others had often fancied the last perfume the sweetest, and then had flown away. But now he was entirely captivated. The divinity was a new beauty; the whole world raving of her. Egremont also advanced. The Lady Arabella was not only beautiful: she was clever, fascinating. Her presence was inspiration; at least for Egremont. She condescended to be pleased by him: she signaled him by her notice; their names were mentioned together. Egremont indulged in flattering dreams. He regretted he had not pursued a profession: he regretted he had impaired his slender patrimony; thought of love in a cottage, and renting a manor; thought of living a good deal with his mother, and a little with his brother; thought of the law and the church; thought once of New Zealand. The favourite of nature and of fashion, this was the first time in the life of Egremont, that he had been made conscious that there was something in his position which, with all its superficial brilliancy, might prepare for him, when youth had fled and the blaze of society grown dim, a drear and bitter lot.

He was roused from his reveries by a painful change in the demeanour of his adored. The mother of the Lady Arabella was alarmed. She liked her daughter to be admired even by younger sons when they were distinguished, but only at a distance. Mr Egremont's name had been mentioned too often. It had appeared coupled with her daughters, even in a Sunday paper. The most decisive measures were requisite, and they were taken. Still smiling when they met, still kind when they conversed, it seemed, by some magic dexterity which even baffled Egremont, that their meetings every day grew rarer, and their opportunities for conversation less frequent. At the end of the season, the Lady Arabella selected from a crowd of admirers equally qualified, a young peer of great estate, and of the "old nobility," a circumstance which, as her grandfather had only been an East India director, was very gratifying to the bride.

This unfortunate passion of Charles Egremont, and its mortifying circumstances and consequences, was just that earliest shock in one's life which occurs to all of us; which first makes us think. We have all experienced that disheartening catastrophe, when the illusions first vanish; and our balked imagination, or our mortified vanity, first intimates to us that we are neither infallible nor irresistible. Happily 'tis the season of youth for which the first lessons of experience are destined; and bitter and intolerable as is the first blight of our fresh feelings, the sanguine impulse of early life bears us along. Our first scrape generally leads to our first travel. Disappointment requires change of air; desperation change of scene. Egremont quitted his country, never to return to it again; and returned to it after a year and a-half's absence, a much wiser man. Having left England in a serious mood, and having already tasted with tolerable freedom of the pleasures and frivolities of life, he was not in an inapt humour to observe, to enquire, and to reflect. The new objects that surrounded him excited his intelligence; he met, which indeed is the principal advantage of travel, remarkable men, whose conversation opened his mind. His mind was worth opening. Energies began to stir of which he had not been conscious; awakened curiosity led him to investigate and to read; he discovered that, when he imagined his education was completed, it had in fact not commenced; and that, although he had been at a public school and a university, he in fact knew nothing. To be conscious that you are ignorant is a great step to knowledge. Before an emancipated intellect and an expanding intelligence, the great system of exclusive manners and exclusive feelings in which he had been born and nurtured, began to tremble; the native generosity of his heart recoiled at a recurrence to that arrogant and frigid life, alike devoid of sympathy and real grandeur.

In the early spring of 1837, Egremont re-entered the world, where he had once sparkled, and which he had once conceived to comprise within its circle all that could interest or occupy man. His mother, delighted at finding him again under her roof, had removed some long-standing coolness between him and his elder brother; his former acquaintance greeted him with cordiality, and introduced him to the new heroes who had sprung up during the season of his absence. Apparently Egremont was not disinclined to pursue, though without eagerness, the same career that had originally engaged him. He frequented assemblies, and lingered in clubs; rode in the park, and lounged at the opera. But there was this difference in his existence, before and since his travels: he was now conscious he wanted an object; and was ever musing over action, though as yet ignorant how to act. Perhaps it was this want of being roused, that led him, it may be for distraction, again to the turf. It was a pursuit that seemed to him more real than the life of saloons, full of affectation, perverted ideas, and factitious passions. Whatever might be the impulse Egremont however was certainly not slightly interested in the Derby; and though by no means uninstructed in the mysteries of the turf, had felt such confidence in his information that, with his usual ardour, he had backed to a considerable amount the horse that ought to have won, but which nevertheless only ran a second.

Book 1 Chapter 6

Notwithstanding the confidence of Lady St Julians, and her unrivalled information, the health of the king did not improve: but still it was the hay fever, only the hay fever. An admission had been allowed to creep into the Court Circular, that “his majesty has been slightly indisposed within the last few days;” but then it was soon followed by a very positive assurance, that his majesty’s favourite and long-matured resolution to give a state banquet to the knights of the four orders, was immediately to be carried into effect. Lady St Julians had the first information of this important circumstance; it confirmed her original conviction: she determined to go on with her quadrille. Egremont, with something interesting at stake himself, was staggered by this announcement, and by Lady St Julians’ unshaken faith. He consulted his mother: Lady Marney shook her head. “Poor woman!” said Lady Marney, “she is always wrong. I know,” continued her ladyship, placing her finger to her lip, “that Prince Esterhazy has been pressing his long-postponed investiture as a Grand Cross, in order that he may dine at this very banquet; and it has been announced to him that it is impossible, the king’s health will not admit of it. When a simple investiture is impossible, a state banquet to the four orders is very probable. No,” said Lady Marney with a sigh; “it is a great blow for all of us, but it is no use shutting our eyes to the fact. The poor dear king will never show again.”

And about a week after this there appeared the first bulletin. From that instant, though the gullish multitude studied the daily reports with grave interest; their hopes and speculations and arrangements changing with each phrase; for the initiated there was no suspense. All knew that it was over; and Lady St Julians, giving up her quadrille, began to look about for seats in parliament for her sons.

“What a happiness it is to have a clever mother,” exclaimed Egremont, as he pondered over the returns of his election agent. Lady Marney, duly warned of the impending catastrophe, was experiencing all the advantages of prior information. It delighted her to meet Lady St Julians driving distractedly about town, calling at clubs, closeted with red tapers, making ingenious combinations that would not work, by means of which some one of her sons was to stand in coalition with some rich parvenu; to pay none of the expenses and yet to come in first. And all this time, Lady Marney, serene and smiling, had the daily pleasure of assuring Lady St Julians what a relief it was to her that Charles had fixed on his place. It had been arranged indeed these weeks past; “but then, you know,” concluded Lady Marney in the sweetest voice and with a blandishing glance, “I never did believe in that hay fever.”

In the meantime the impending event changed the whole aspect of the political world. The king dying before the new registration was the greatest blow to pseudo-toryism since his majesty, calling for a hackney coach, went down and dissolved parliament in 1831. It was calculated by the Tadpoles and Tapers that a dissolution by Sir Robert, after the registration of 1837, would give him a clear majority, not too great a one, but large enough: a manageable majority; some five-and-twenty or thirty men, who with a probable peerage or two dangling in the distance, half-a-dozen positive baronetcies, the Customs for their constituents, and Court balls for their wives, might be induced to save the state. O! England, glorious and ancient realm, the fortunes of thy polity are indeed strange! The wisdom of the Saxons, Norman valour, the state-craft of the Tudors, the national sympathies of the Stuarts, the spirit of the latter Guelphs struggling against their enslaved sovereignty,—these are the high qualities, that for a thousand years have secured thy national developement. And now all thy memorial dynasties end in the huckstering rule of some thirty unknown and anonymous jobbers! The Thirty at Athens were at least tyrants. They were marked men. But the obscure majority, who under our present constitution are destined to govern England, are as secret as a Venetian conclave. Yet on their dark voices all depends. Would you promote or prevent some great measure that may affect the destinies of unborn millions, and the future character of the people,—take, for example, a system

of national education,—the minister must apportion the plunder to the illiterate clan; the scum that floats on the surface of a party; or hold out the prospect of honours, which are only honourable when in their transmission they impart and receive lustre; when they are the meed of public virtue and public services, and the distinction of worth and of genius. It is impossible that the system of the thirty can long endure in an age of inquiry and agitated spirit like the present. Such a system may suit the balanced interests and the periodical and alternate command of rival oligarchical connections: but it can subsist only by the subordination of the sovereign and the degradation of the multitude; and cannot accord with an age, whose genius will soon confess that Power and the People are both divine.

“He can’t last ten days,” said a whig secretary of the treasury with a triumphant glance at Mr Taper as they met in Pall Mall; “You’re out for our lives.”

“Don’t you make too sure for yourselves,” rejoined in despair the dismayed Taper. “It does not follow that because we are out, that you are in.”

“How do you mean?”

“There is such a person as Lord Durham in the world,” said Mr Taper very solemnly.

“Pish,” said the secretary.

“You may pish,” said Mr Taper, “but if we have a radical government, as I believe and hope, they will not be able to get up the steam as they did in —31; and what with church and corn together, and the Queen Dowager, we may go to the country with as good a cry as some other persons.”

“I will back Melbourne against the field, now,” said the secretary.

“Lord Durham dined at Kensington on Thursday,” said Taper, “and not a whig present.”

“Ay; Durham talks very fine at dinner,” said the secretary, “but he has no real go in him. When there is a Prince of Wales, Lord Melbourne means to make Durham governor to the heir apparent, and that will keep him quiet.”

“What do you hear?” said Mr Tadpole, joining them; “I am told he has quite rallied.”

“Don’t you flatter yourself,” said the secretary.

“Well, we shall hear what they say on the hustings,” said Tadpole looking boldly.

“Who’s afraid!” said the secretary. “No, no, my dear fellow, you are dead beat; the stake is worth playing for, and don’t suppose we are such flats as to lose the race for want of jockeying. Your humbugging registration will never do against a new reign. Our great men mean to shell out, I tell you; we have got Croucher; we will denounce the Carlton and corruption all over the kingdom; and if that won’t do, we will swear till we are black in the face, that the King of Hanover is engaged in a plot to dethrone our young Queen:” and the triumphant secretary wished the worthy pair good morning.

“They certainly have a very good cry,” said Taper mournfully.

“After all, the registration might be better,” said Tadpole, “but still it is a very good one.”

The daily bulletins became more significant; the crisis was evidently at hand. A dissolution of parliament at any time must occasion great excitement; combined with a new reign, it inflames the passions of every class of the community. Even the poor begin to hope; the old, wholesome superstition still lingers, that the sovereign can exercise power; and the suffering multitude are fain to believe that its remedial character may be about to be revealed in their instance. As for the aristocracy in a new reign, they are all in a flutter. A bewildering vision of coronets, stars, and ribbons; smiles, and places at court; haunts their noontide speculations and their midnight dreams. Then we must not forget the numberless instances in which the coming event is deemed to supply the long-sought opportunity of distinction, or the long-dreaded cause of utter discomfiture; the hundreds, the thousands, who mean to get into parliament, the units who dread getting out. What a crashing change from lounging in St James’s street to sauntering on Boulogne pier; or, after dining at Brookes and supping at Crockford’s, to be saved from destruction by the friendly interposition that sends you in an official capacity to the marsupial sympathies of Sydney or Swan River!

Now is the time for the men to come forward who have claims; claims for spending their money, which nobody asked them to do, but which of course they only did for the sake of the party. They

never wrote for their party, or spoke for their party, or gave their party any other vote than their own; but they urge their claims,—to something; a commissionership of anything, or a consulship anywhere; if no place to be had, they are ready to take it out in dignities. They once looked to the privy council, but would now be content with an hereditary honour; if they can have neither, they will take a clerkship in the Treasury for a younger son. Perhaps they may get that in time; at present they go away growling with a gaugership; or, having with desperate dexterity at length contrived to transform a tidewaiter into a landwaiter. But there is nothing like asking—except refusing.

Hark! it tolls! All is over. The great bell of the metropolitan cathedral announces the death of the last son of George the Third who probably will ever reign in England. He was a good man: with feelings and sympathies; deficient in culture rather than ability; with a sense of duty; and with something of the conception of what should be the character of an English monarch. Peace to his manes! We are summoned to a different scene.

In a palace in a garden—not in a haughty keep, proud with the fame, but dark with the violence of ages; not in a regal pile, bright with the splendour, but soiled with the intrigues, of courts and factions—in a palace in a garden, meet scene for youth, and innocence, and beauty—came the voice that told the maiden she must ascend her throne!

The council of England is summoned for the first time within her bowers. There are assembled the prelates and captains and chief men of her realm; the priests of the religion that consoles, the heroes of the sword that has conquered, the votaries of the craft that has decided the fate of empires; men grey with thought, and fame, and age; who are the stewards of divine mysteries, who have encountered in battle the hosts of Europe, who have toiled in secret cabinets, who have struggled in the less merciful strife of aspiring senates; men too, some of them, lords of a thousand vassals and chief proprietors of provinces, yet not one of them whose heart does not at this moment tremble as he awaits the first presence of the maiden who must now ascend her throne.

A hum of half-suppressed conversation which would attempt to conceal the excitement, which some of the greatest of them have since acknowledged, fills that brilliant assemblage; that sea of plumes, and glittering stars, and gorgeous dresses. Hush! the portals open; She comes! The silence is as deep as that of a noontide forest. Attended for a moment by her royal mother and the ladies of her court, who bow and then retire, VICTORIA ascends her throne; a girl, alone, and for the first time, amid an assemblage of men.

In a sweet and thrilling voice, and with a composed mien which indicates rather the absorbing sense of august duty than an absence of emotion, THE QUEEN announces her accession to the throne of her ancestors, and her humble hope that divine providence will guard over the fulfilment of her lofty trust.

The prelates and captains and chief men of her realm then advance to the throne, and kneeling before her, pledge their troth, and take the sacred oaths of allegiance and supremacy.

Allegiance to one who rules over the land that the great Macedonian could not conquer; and over a continent of which even Columbus never dreamed: to the Queen of every sea, and of nations in every zone.

It is not of these that I would speak; but of a nation nearer her foot-stool, and which at this moment looks to her with anxiety, with affection, perhaps with hope. Fair and serene, she has the blood and beauty of the Saxon. Will it be her proud destiny at length to bear relief to suffering millions, and with that soft hand which might inspire troubadours and guerdon knights, break the last links in the chain of Saxon thralldom?

END OF THE FIRST BOOK

BOOK II

Book 2 Chapter 1

The building which was still called MARNEY ABBEY, though remote from the site of the ancient monastery, was an extensive structure raised at the latter end of the reign of James the First, and in the stately and picturesque style of that age. Placed on a noble elevation in the centre of an extensive and well wooded park, it presented a front with two projecting wings of equal dimensions with the centre, so that the form of the building was that of a quadrangle, less one of its sides. Its ancient lattices had been removed, and the present windows though convenient accorded little with the structure; the old entrance door in the centre of the building however still remained, a wondrous specimen of fantastic carving: Ionic columns of black oak, with a profusion of fruits and flowers, and heads of stags and sylvens. The whole of the building was crowned with a considerable pediment of what seemed at the first glance fanciful open work, but which examined more nearly offered in gigantic letters the motto of the house of Marney. The portal opened to a hall, such as is now rarely found; with the dais, the screen, the gallery, and the buttery-hatch all perfect, and all of carved black oak. Modern luxury, and the refined taste of the lady of the late lord, had made Marney Abbey as remarkable for its comfort and pleasantness of accommodation as for its ancient state and splendour. The apartments were in general furnished with all the cheerful ease and brilliancy of the modern mansion of a noble, but the grand gallery of the seventeenth century was still preserved, and was used on great occasions as the chief reception-room. You ascended the principal staircase to reach it through a long corridor. It occupied the whole length of one of the wings; was one hundred feet long, and forty-five feet broad, its walls hung with a collection of choice pictures rich in history; while the Axminster carpets, the cabinets, carved tables, and variety of easy chairs, ingeniously grouped, imparted even to this palatian chamber a lively and habitable air.

Lord Marney was several years the senior of Charles Egremont, yet still a young man. He was handsome; there was indeed a general resemblance between the brothers, though the expression of their countenances was entirely different; of the same height and air, and throughout the features a certain family cast; but here the likeness ceased. The countenance of Lord Marney bespoke the character of his mind; cynical, devoid of sentiment, arrogant, literal, hard. He had no imagination, had exhausted his slight native feeling, but he was acute, disputatious, and firm even to obstinacy. Though his early education had been very imperfect, he had subsequently read a good deal, especially in French literature. He had formed his mind by Helvetius, whose system he deemed irrefutable, and in whom alone he had faith. Armed with the principles of his great master, he believed he could pass through existence in adamantine armour, and always gave you in the business of life the idea of a man who was conscious you were trying to take him in, and rather respected you for it, but the working of whose cold, unkind, eye defied you.

There never had been excessive cordiality between the brothers even in their boyish days, and shortly after Egremont's entrance into life, they had become estranged. They were to meet now for the first time since Egremont's return from the continent. Their mother had arranged their reconciliation. They were to meet as if no misunderstanding had ever existed between them; it was specially stipulated by Lord Marney, that there was to be no "scene." Apprised of Egremont's impending arrival, Lord Marney was careful to be detained late that day at petty sessions, and entered the room only a few minutes before dinner was announced, where he found Egremont not only with the countess and a young lady who was staying with her, but with additional bail against any ebullition of sentiment in the shape of the Vicar of Marney, and a certain Captain Grouse, who was a kind of aide-de-camp of the earl; killed birds and carved them; played billiards with him, and lost; had

indeed every accomplishment that could please woman or ease man; could sing, dance, draw, make artificial flies, break horses, exercise a supervision over stewards and bailiffs, and make every body comfortable by taking everything on his own shoulders.

Lady Marney had received Egremont in a manner which expressed the extreme satisfaction she experienced at finding him once more beneath his brother's roof. When he arrived indeed, he would have preferred to have been shown at once to his rooms, but a message immediately delivered expressed the wish of his sister-in-law at once to see him. She received him alone and with great warmth. She was beautiful, and soft as May; a glowing yet delicate face; rich brown hair, and large blue eyes; not yet a mother, but with something of the dignity of the matron blending with the lingering timidity of the girl.

Egremont was glad to join his sister-in-law again in the drawing-room before dinner. He seated himself by her side; and in answer to her enquiries was giving her some narrative of his travels; the Vicar who was very low church, was shaking his head at Lady Marney's young friend, who was enlarging on the excellence of Mr Paget's tales; while Captain Grouse, in a very stiff white neck-cloth, very tight pantaloons, to show his very celebrated legs, transparent stockings and polished shoes, was throwing himself into attitudes in the back ground, and with a zeal amounting almost to enthusiasm, teaching Lady Marney's spaniel to beg; when the door opened, and Lord Marney entered, but as if to make security doubly sure, not alone. He was accompanied by a neighbour and brother magistrate, Sir Vavasour Firebrace, a baronet of the earliest batch, and a gentleman of great family and great estate.

“Well Charles!”

“How are you George?”

And the brothers shook hands.

‘Tis the English way; and if they had been inclined to fall into each other's arms, they would not probably have done more.

In a few minutes it was announced that dinner was served, and so, secured from a scene, having a fair appetite, and surrounded by dishes that could agreeably satisfy it, a kind of vague fraternal sentiment began to stir the breast of Lord Marney: he really was glad to see his brother again; remembered the days when they rode their ponies and played cricket; his voice softened, his eyes sparkled, and he at length exclaimed, “Do you know, old fellow, it makes me quite happy to see you here again. Suppose we take a glass of wine.”

The softer heart and more susceptible spirit of Egremont were well calculated to respond to this ebullition of feeling, however slight; and truly it was for many reasons not without considerable emotion, that he found himself once more at Marney. He sate by the side of his gentle sister-in-law, who seemed pleased by the unwonted cordiality of her husband, and anxious by many kind offices to second every indication of good feeling on his part. Captain Grouse was extremely assiduous: the vicar was of the deferential breed, agreed with Lady Marney on the importance of infant schools, but recalled his opinion when Lord Marney expressed his imperious hope that no infant schools would ever be found in his neighbourhood. Sir Vavasour was more than middle aged, comely, very gentlemanlike, but with an air occasionally of absence which hardly agreed with his frank and somewhat hearty idiosyncrasy; his clear brow, florid complexion, and blue eye. But Lord Marney talked a good deal, though chiefly dogmatical or argumentative. It was rather difficult for him to find a sufficient stock of opposition, but he laid in wait and seized every opening with wonderful alacrity. Even Captain Grouse could not escape him; if driven to extremity Lord Marney would even question his principles on fly-making. Captain Grouse gave up, but not too soon; he was well aware that his noble friend's passion for controversy was equal to his love of conquest. As for Lady Marney, it was evident that with no inconsiderable talents, and with an intelligence richly cultivated, the controversial genius of her husband had completely cowed her conversational charms. She never advanced a proposition that he did not immediately bristle up, and she could only evade the encounter by a graceful submission. As for the vicar, a frequent guest, he would fain have taken refuge in

silence, but the earl, especially when alone, would what he called “draw him out,” and the game once unearthed, with so skilled a pack there was but little fear of a bad run. When all were reduced to silence, Lord Marney relinquishing controversy, assumed the positive. He eulogized the new poor law, which he declared would be the salvation of the country, provided it was “carried out” in the spirit in which it was developed in the Marney Union; but then he would add that there was no district except their union in which it was properly observed. He was tremendously fierce against allotments and analysed the system with merciless sarcasm, Indeed he had no inconsiderable acquaintance with the doctrines of the economists, and was rather inclined to carry them into practice in every instance, except that of the landed proprietary, which he clearly proved “stood upon different grounds” to that of any other “interest.” There was nothing he hated so much as a poacher, except a lease; though perhaps in the catalogue of his aversions, we ought to give the preference to his anti-ecclesiastical prejudice: this amounted even to acrimony. Though there was no man breathing who was possessed with such a strong repugnance to subscriptions of any kind, it delighted Lord Marney to see his name among the contributors to all sectarian institutions. The vicar of Marney, who had been presented by himself, was his model of a priest: he left every body alone. Under the influence of Lady Marney, the worthy vicar had once warmed up into some ebullition of very low church zeal; there was some talk of an evening lecture, the schools were to be remodelled, certain tracts were actually distributed. But Lord Marney soon stopped all this. “No priestcraft at Marney,” said this gentle proprietor of abbey lands.

“I wanted very much to come and canvass for you,” said Lady Marney to Egremont, “but George did not like it.”

“The less the family interfered the better,” said Lord Marney; “and for my part, I was very much alarmed when I heard my mother had gone down.”

“Oh! my mother did wonders,” said Egremont: “we should have been beat without her. Indeed, to tell the truth, I quite gave up the thing the moment they started their man. Before that we were on velvet; but the instant he appeared everything was changed, and I found some of my warmest supporters, members of his committee.”

“You had a formidable opponent, Lord Marney told me,” said Sir Vavasour. “Who was he?”

“Oh! a dreadful man! A Scotchman, richer than Croesus, one McDruggy, fresh from Canton, with a million of opium in each pocket, denouncing corruption, and bellowing free trade.”

“But they do not care much for free trade in the old borough?” said Lord Marney.

“No, it was a mistake,” said Egremont, “and the cry was changed the moment my opponent was on the ground. Then all the town was placarded with ‘Vote for McDruggy and our young Queen,’ as if he had coalesced with her Majesty.”

“My mother must have been in despair,” said Lord Marney.

“We issued our placard instantly of ‘Vote for our young Queen and Egremont,’ which was at least more modest, and turned out more popular.”

“That I am sure was my mother,” said Lord Marney.

“No,” said Egremont; “it was the effusion of a far more experienced mind. My mother was in hourly communication with head quarters, and Mr Taper sent down the cry by express.”

“Peel, in or out, will support the Poor Law,” said Lord Marney, rather audaciously, as he reseated himself after the ladies had retired. “He must;” and he looked at his brother, whose return had in a great degree been secured by crying that Poor Law down.

“It is impossible,” said Charles, fresh from the hustings, and speaking from the card of Taper, for the condition of the people was a subject of which he knew nothing.

“He will carry it out,” said Lord Marney, “you’ll see, or the land will not support him.”

“I wish,” said Sir Vavasour, “we could manage some modification about out-door relief.”

“Modification!” said Lord Marney; “why there has been nothing but modification. What we want is stringency.”

“The people will never bear it,” said Egremont; “there must be some change.”

“You cannot go back to the abuses of the old system,” said Captain Grouse, making, as he thought, a safe observation.

“Better go back to the old system, than modify the new,” said Lord Marney.

“I wish the people would take to it a little more,” said Sir Vavasour; “they certainly do not like it in our parish.”

“The people are very contented here, eh Slimsey?” said Lord Marney.

“Very,” said the vicar.

Hereupon a conversation took place, principally sustained by the earl and the baronet, which developed all the resources of the great parochial mind. Dietaries, bastardy, gaol regulations, game laws, were amply discussed; and Lord Marney wound up with a declaration of the means by which the country might be saved, and which seemed principally to consist of high prices and low church.

“If the sovereign could only know her best friends,” said Sir Vavasour, with a sigh.

Lord Marney seemed to get uneasy.

“And avoid the fatal mistakes of her predecessor,” continued the baronet.

“Charles, another glass of claret,” said the earl.

“She might yet rally round the throne a body of men”—

“Then we will go to the ladies,” said the earl, abruptly disturbing his guest.

Book 2 Chapter 2

There was music as they re-entered the drawing-room. Sir Vavasour attached himself to Egremont.

“It is a great pleasure for me to see you again, Mr Egremont;” said the worthy baronet. “Your father was my earliest and kindest friend. I remember you at Firebrace, a very little boy. Happy to see you again, Sir, in so eminent a position; a legislator—one of our legislators. It gave me a sincere satisfaction to observe your return.”

“You are very kind, Sir Vavasour.”

“But it is a responsible position,” continued the baronet. “Think you they’ll stand? A majority. I suppose, they have; but, I conclude, in time; Sir Robert will have it in time? We must not be in a hurry; ‘the more haste’—you know the rest. The country is decidedly conservative. All that we want now is a strong government, that will put all things to rights. If the poor king had lived—”

“He would have sent these men to the right-about;” said Egremont, a young politician, proud of his secret intelligence.

“Ah! the poor king!” said Sir Vavasour, shaking his head.

“He was entirely with us,” said Egremont.

“Poor man” said Sir Vavasour.

“You think it was too late, then?” said his companion.

“You are a young man entering political life,” said the baronet, taking Egremont kindly by the arm, and leading him to a sofa; “everything depends on the first step. You have a great opportunity. Nothing can be done by a mere individual. The most powerful body in this country wants a champion.”

“But you can depend on Peel?” said Egremont.

“He is one of us: we ought to be able to depend on him. But I have spoken to him for an hour, and could get nothing out of him.”

“He is cautious; but depend upon it, he will stand or fall by the land.”

“I am not thinking of the land,” said Sir Vavasour; “of something much more important; with all the influence of the land, and a great deal more besides; of an order of men who are ready to rally round the throne, and are, indeed, if justice were done to them, its natural and hereditary champions (Egremont looked perplexity); I am speaking,” added Sir Vavasour, in a solemn voice, “I am speaking of the baronets.”

“The baronets! And what do they want?”

“Their rights; their long withheld rights. The poor king was with us. He has frequently expressed to me and other deputies, his determination to do us justice; but he was not a strong-minded man,” said Sir Vavasour, with a sigh; “and in these revolutionary and levelling times, he had a hard task perhaps. And the peers, who are our brethren, they were, I fear, against us. But in spite of the ministers, and in spite of the peers, had the poor king lived, we should at least have had the badge,” added Sir Vavasour mournfully.

“The badge!”

“It would have satisfied Sir Grosvenor le Draughte,” said Sir Vavasour; “and he had a strong party with him; he was for compromise, but d— him, his father was only an accoucheur.”

“And you wanted more?” inquired Egremont, with a demure look.

“All, or nothing,” said Sir Vavasour; “principle is ever my motto—no expediency. I made a speech to the order at the Clarendon; there were four hundred of us; the feeling was very strong.”

“A powerful party,” said Egremont.

“And a military order, sir, if properly understood. What could stand against us? The Reform Bill could never have passed if the baronets had been organized.”

“I have no doubt you could bring us in now,” said Egremont.

“That is exactly what I told Sir Robert. I want him to be brought in by his own order. It would be a grand thing.”

“There is nothing like esprit de corps,” said Egremont.

“And such a body!” exclaimed Sir Vavasour, with animation. “Picture us for a moment, to yourself going down in procession to Westminster for example to hold a chapter. Five or six hundred baronets in dark green costume,—the appropriate dress of equites aurati; each not only with his badge, but with his collar of S.S.; belted and scarfed; his star glittering; his pennon flying; his hat white with a plume of white feathers; of course the sword and the gilt spurs. In our hand, the thumb ring and signet not forgotten, we hold our coronet of two balls!”

Egremont stared with irrepressible astonishment at the excited being, who unconsciously pressed his companion’s arm, as he drew this rapid sketch of the glories so unconstitutionally withheld from him.

“A magnificent spectacle!” said Egremont.

“Evidently the body destined to save this country,” eagerly continued Sir Vavasour. “Blending all sympathies: the crown of which they are the peculiar champions; the nobles of whom they are the popular branch; the people who recognize in them their natural leaders. But the picture is not complete. We should be accompanied by an equal number of gallant knights, our elder sons, who, the moment they come of age, have the right to claim knighthood of their sovereign, while their mothers and wives, no longer degraded to the nomenclature of a sheriff’s lady, but resuming their legal or analogical dignities, and styled the ‘honourable baronetess,’ with her coronet and robe, or the ‘honourable knightess,’ with her golden collar of S.S., and chaplet or cap of dignity, may either accompany the procession, or ranged in galleries in a becoming situation, rain influence from above.”

“I am all for their going in the procession,” said Egremont.

“The point is not so clear,” said Sir Vavasour solemnly; “and indeed, although we have been firm in defining our rightful claims in our petitions, as for ‘honorary epithets, secondary titles, personal decorations, and augmented heraldic bearings.’ I am not clear if the government evinced a disposition for a liberal settlement of the question, I would not urge a too stringent adherence to every point. For instance, I am prepared myself, great as would be the sacrifice, even to renounce the claim of secondary titles for our eldest sons, if for instance they would secure us our coronet.”

“Fie, fie, Sir Vavasour,” said Egremont very seriously, “remember principle: no expediency, no compromise.”

“You are right,” said the baronet, colouring a little; “and do you know, Mr Egremont, you are the only individual I have yet met out of the Order, who has taken a sensible view of this great question, which, after all, is the question of the day.”

Book 2 Chapter 3

The situation of the rural town of Marney was one of the most delightful easily to be imagined. In a spreading dale, contiguous to the margin of a clear and lively stream, surrounded by meadows and gardens, and backed by lofty hills, undulating and richly wooded, the traveller on the opposite heights of the dale would often stop to admire the merry prospect, that recalled to him the traditional epithet of his country.

Beautiful illusion! For behind that laughing landscape, penury and disease fed upon the vitals of a miserable population!

The contrast between the interior of the town and its external aspect, was as striking as it was full of pain. With the exception of the dull high street, which had the usual characteristics of a small agricultural market town, some sombre mansions, a dingy inn, and a petty bourse, Marney mainly consisted of a variety of narrow and crowded lanes formed by cottages built of rubble, or unhewn stones without cement, and from age, or badness of the material, looking as if they could scarcely hold together. The gaping chinks admitted every blast; the leaning chimneys had lost half their original height; the rotten rafters were evidently misplaced; while in many instances the thatch, yawning in some parts to admit the wind and wet, and in all utterly unfit for its original purpose of giving protection from the weather, looked more like the top of a dunghill than a cottage. Before the doors of these dwellings, and often surrounding them, ran open drains full of animal and vegetable refuse, decomposing into disease, or sometimes in their imperfect course filling foul pits or spreading into stagnant pools, while a concentrated solution of every species of dissolving filth was allowed to soak through and thoroughly impregnate the walls and ground adjoining.

These wretched tenements seldom consisted of more than two rooms, in one of which the whole family, however numerous, were obliged to sleep, without distinction of age, or sex, or suffering. With the water streaming down the walls, the light distinguished through the roof, with no hearth even in winter, the virtuous mother in the sacred pangs of childbirth, gives forth another victim to our thoughtless civilization; surrounded by three generations whose inevitable presence is more painful than her sufferings in that hour of travail; while the father of her coming child, in another corner of the sordid chamber, lies stricken by that typhus which his contaminating dwelling has breathed into his veins, and for whose next prey is perhaps destined, his new-born child. These swarming walls had neither windows nor doors sufficient to keep out the weather, or admit the sun or supply the means of ventilation; the humid and putrid roof of thatch exhaling malaria like all other decaying vegetable matter. The dwelling rooms were neither boarded nor paved; and whether it were that some were situate in low and damp places, occasionally flooded by the river, and usually much below the level of the road; or that the springs, as was often the case, would burst through the mud floor; the ground was at no time better than so much clay, while sometimes you might see little channels cut from the centre under the doorways to carry off the water, the door itself removed from its hinges: a resting place for infancy in its deluged home. These hovels were in many instances not provided with the commonest conveniences of the rudest police; contiguous to every door might be observed the dung-heap on which every kind of filth was accumulated, for the purpose of being disposed of for manure, so that, when the poor man opened his narrow habitation in the hope of refreshing it with the breeze of summer, he was met with a mixture of gases from reeking dunghills.

This town of Marney was a metropolis of agricultural labour, for the proprietors of the neighbourhood having for the last half century acted on the system of destroying the cottages on their estates, in order to become exempted from the maintenance of the population, the expelled people had flocked to Marney, where, during the war, a manufactory had afforded them some relief, though its wheels had long ceased to disturb the waters of the Mar.

Deprived of this resource, they had again gradually spread themselves over that land which had as it were rejected them; and obtained from its churlish breast a niggardly subsistence. Their re-entrance into the surrounding parishes was viewed with great suspicion; their renewed settlement opposed by every ingenious contrivance; those who availed themselves of their labour were careful that they should not become dwellers on the soil; and though, from the excessive competition, there were few districts in the kingdom where the rate of wages was more depressed, those who were fortunate enough to obtain the scant remuneration, had, in addition to their toil, to endure each morn and even a weary journey before they could reach the scene of their labour, or return to the squalid hovel which profaned the name of home. To that home, over which Malaria hovered, and round whose shivering hearth were clustered other guests besides the exhausted family of toil—Fever, in every form, pale Consumption, exhausting Synochus, and trembling Ague,—returned after cultivating the broad fields of merry England the bold British peasant, returned to encounter the worst of diseases with a frame the least qualified to oppose them; a frame that subdued by toil was never sustained by animal food; drenched by the tempest could not change its dripping rags; and was indebted for its scanty fuel to the windfalls of the woods.

The eyes of this unhappy race might have been raised to the solitary spire that sprang up in the midst of them, the bearer of present consolation, the harbinger of future equality; but Holy Church at Marney had forgotten her sacred mission. We have introduced the reader to the vicar, an orderly man who deemed he did his duty if he preached each week two sermons, and enforced humility on his congregation and gratitude for the blessings of this life. The high Street and some neighbouring gentry were the staple of his hearers. Lord and Lady Marney came, attended by Captain Grouse, every Sunday morning with commendable regularity, and were ushered into the invisible interior of a vast pew, that occupied half of the gallery, was lined with crimson damask, and furnished with easy chairs, and, for those who chose them, well-padded stools of prayer. The people of Marney took refuge in conventicles, which abounded; little plain buildings of pale brick with the names painted on them, of Sion, Bethel, Bethesda: names of a distant land, and the language of a persecuted and ancient race: yet, such is the mysterious power of their divine quality, breathing consolation in the nineteenth century to the harassed forms and the harrowed souls of a Saxon peasantry.

But however devoted to his flock might have been the Vicar of Marney, his exertions for their well being, under any circumstances, must have been mainly limited to spiritual consolation. Married and a father he received for his labours the small tithes of the parish, which secured to him an income by no means equal to that of a superior banker's clerk, or the cook of a great loanmonger. The great tithes of Marney, which might be counted by thousands, swelled the vast rental which was drawn from this district by the fortunate earls that bore its name.

The morning after the arrival of Egremont at the Abbey, an unusual stir might have been observed in the high Street of the town. Round the portico of the Green Dragon hotel and commercial inn, a knot of principal personages, the chief lawyer, the brewer, the vicar himself, and several of those easy quidnuncs who abound in country towns, and who rank under the designation of retired gentlemen, were in close and very earnest converse. In a short time a servant on horseback in the Abbey livery galloped up to the portico, and delivered a letter to the vicar. The excitement apparently had now greatly increased. On the opposite side of the way to the important group, a knot, larger in numbers but very deficient in quality, had formed themselves, and remained transfixed with gaping mouths and a Curious not to say alarmed air. The head constable walked up to the door of the Green Dragon, and though he did not presume to join the principal group, was evidently in attendance, if required. The clock struck eleven; a cart had stopped to watch events, and a gentleman's coachman riding home with a led horse.

“Here they are!” said the brewer.

“Lord Marney himself,” said the lawyer.

“And Sir Vavasour Firebrace, I declare. I wonder how he came here,” said a retired gentleman, who had been a tallow-chandler on Holborn Hill.

The vicar took off his hat, and all uncovered. Lord Marney and his brother magistrate rode briskly up to the inn and rapidly dismounted.

“Well, Snigford,” said his lordship, in a peremptory tone, “this is a pretty business; I’ll have this stopped directly.”

Fortunate man if he succeed in doing so! The torch of the incendiary had for the first time been introduced into the parish of Marney; and last night the primest stacks of the Abbey farm had blazed a beacon to the agitated neighbourhood.

Book 2 Chapter 4

“It is not so much the fire, sir,” said Mr Bingley of the Abbey farm to Egremont, “but the temper of the people that alarms me. Do you know, sir, there were two or three score of them here, and, except my own farm servants, not one of them would lend a helping hand to put out the flames, though, with water so near, they might have been of great service.”

“You told my brother, Lord Marney, this?”

“Oh! it’s Mr Charles I’m speaking to! My service to you, sir; I’m glad to see you in these parts again. It’s a long time that we have had that pleasure, sir. Travelling in foreign parts, as I have heard say?”

“Something of that; but very glad to find myself at home once more, Mr Bingley, though very sorry to have such a welcome as a blazing rick at the Abbey farm.”

“Well, do you know, Mr Charles, between ourselves,” and Mr Bingley lowered his tone, and looked around him, “Things is very bad here; I can’t make out, for my part, what has become of the country. Tayn’t the same land to live in as it was when you used to come to our moor coursing, with the old lord; you remember that, I be sure, Mr Charles?”

“‘Tis not easy to forget good sport, Mr Bingley. With your permission, I will put my horse up here for half an hour. I have a fancy to stroll to the ruins.”

“You wanna find them much changed,” said the farmer, smiling. “They have seen a deal of different things in their time! But you will taste our ale, Mr Charles?”

“When I return.”

But the hospitable Bingley would take no denial, and as his companion waived on the present occasion entering his house, for the sun had been some time declining, the farmer, calling one of his labourers to take Egremont’s horse, hastened into the house to fill the brimming cup.

“And what do you think of this fire?” said Egremont to the hind.

“I think ‘tis hard times for the poor, sir.”

“But rick-burning will not make the times easier, my good man.”

The man made no reply, but with a dogged look led away the horse to his stable.

About half a mile from Marney, the dale narrowed, and the river took a winding course. It ran through meads, soft and vivid with luxuriant vegetation, bounded on either side by rich hanging woods, save where occasionally a quarry broke the verdant bosom of the heights with its rugged and tawny form. Fair stone and plenteous timber, and the current of fresh waters, combined, with the silent and secluded scene screened from every harsh and angry wind, to form the sacred spot that in old days Holy Church loved to hallow with its beauteous and enduring structures. Even the stranger therefore when he had left the town about two miles behind him, and had heard the farm and mill which he had since passed, called the Abbey farm and the Abbey mill, might have been prepared for the grateful vision of some monastic remains. As for Egremont, he had been almost born amid the ruins of Marney Abbey; its solemn relics were associated with his first and freshest fancies; every footstep was as familiar to him as it could have been to one of the old monks; yet never without emotion could he behold these unrivalled remains of one of the greatest of the great religious houses of the North.

Over a space of not less than ten acres might still be observed the fragments of the great abbey: these were, towards their limit, in general moss-grown and mouldering memorials that told where once rose the offices and spread the terraced gardens of the old proprietors; here might still be traced the dwelling of the lord abbot; and there, still more distinctly, because built on a greater scale and of materials still more intended for perpetuity, the capacious hospital, a name that did not then denote the dwelling of disease, but a place where all the rights of hospitality were practised; where the traveller from the proud baron to the lonely pilgrim asked the shelter and the succour that never were denied,

and at whose gate, called the Portal of the Poor, the peasants on the Abbey lands, if in want, might appeal each morn and night for raiment and for food.

But it was in the centre of this tract of ruins, occupying a space of not less than two acres, that, with a strength that had defied time, and with a beauty that had at last turned away the wrath of man, still rose if not in perfect, yet admirable, form and state, one of the noblest achievements of Christian art,—the Abbey church. The summer vault was now its only roof, and all that remained of its gorgeous windows was the vastness of their arched symmetry, and some wreathed relics of their fantastic frame-work, but the rest was uninjured.

From the west window, looking over the transept chapel of the Virgin, still adorned with pillars of marble and alabaster, the eye wandered down the nave to the great orient light, a length of nearly three hundred feet, through a gorgeous avenue of unshaken walls and columns that clustered to the skies, On each side of the Lady's chapel rose a tower. One which was of great antiquity, being of that style which is commonly called Norman, short and very thick and square, did not mount much above the height of the western front; but the other tower was of a character very different, It was tall and light, and of a Gothic style most pure and graceful; the stone of which it was built, of a bright and even sparkling colour, and looking as if it were hewn but yesterday. At first, its turretted crest seemed injured; but the truth is, it was unfinished; the workmen were busied on this very tower the day that old Baldwin Greymount came as the king's commissioner to inquire into the conduct of this religious house. The abbots loved to memorise their reigns by some public work, which should add to the beauty of their buildings or the convenience of their subjects; and the last of the ecclesiastical lords of Marney, a man of fine taste and a skilful architect, was raising this new belfry for his brethren when the stern decree arrived that the bells should no more sound. And the hymn was no more to be chaunted in the Lady's chapel; and the candles were no more to be lit on the high altar; and the gate of the poor was to be closed for ever; and the wanderer was no more to find a home.

The body of the church was in many parts overgrown with brambles and in all covered with a rank vegetation. It had been a very sultry day, and the blaze of the meridian heat still inflamed the air; the kine for shelter, rather than for sustenance, had wandered through some broken arches, and were lying in the shadow of the nave. This desecration of a spot, once sacred, still beautiful and solemn, jarred on the feelings of Egremont. He sighed and turning away, followed a path that after a few paces led him into the cloister garden. This was a considerable quadrangle; once surrounding the garden of the monks, but all that remained of that fair pleasance was a solitary yew in its centre, that seemed the oldest tree that could well live, and was, according to tradition, more ancient than the most venerable walls of the Abbey. Round this quadrangle was the refectory, the library and the kitchen, and above them the cells and dormitory of the brethren. An imperfect staircase, not without danger, led to these unroofed chambers; but Egremont familiar with the way did not hesitate to pursue it, so that he soon found himself on an elevation overlooking the garden, while further on extended the vast cloisters of the monks, and adjoining was a cemetery, that had once been enclosed, and communicated with the cloister garden.

It was one of those summer days that are so still, that they seem as it were a holiday of nature. The weary wind was sleeping in some grateful cavern, and the sunbeams basking on some fervent knoll; the river floated with a drowsy unconscious course: there was no wave in the grass, no stir in the branches.

A silence so profound amid these solemn ruins, offered the perfection of solitude; and there was that stirring in the mind of Egremont which rendered him far from indisposed for this loneliness.

The slight words that he had exchanged with the farmer and the hind had left him musing. Why was England not the same land as in the days of his light-hearted youth? Why were these hard times for the poor? He stood among the ruins that, as the farmer had well observed, had seen many changes: changes of creeds, of dynasties, of laws, of manners. New orders of men had arisen in the country, new sources of wealth had opened, new dispositions of power to which that wealth had necessarily

led. His own house, his own order, had established themselves on the ruins of that great body, the emblems of whose ancient magnificence and strength surrounded him. And now his order was in turn menaced. And the People—the millions of Toil, on whose unconscious energies during these changeful centuries all rested—what changes had these centuries brought to them? Had their advance in the national scale borne a due relation to that progress of their rulers, which had accumulated in the treasuries of a limited class the riches of the world; and made their possessors boast that they were the first of nations; the most powerful and the most free, the most enlightened, the most moral, and the most religious? Were there any rick-burners in the times of the lord abbots? And if not, why not? And why should the stacks of the Earls of Marney be destroyed, and those of the Abbots of Marney spared?

Brooding over these suggestions, some voices disturbed him, and looking round, he observed in the cemetery two men: one was standing beside a tomb which his companion was apparently examining.

The first was of lofty stature, and though dressed with simplicity, had nothing sordid in his appearance. His garments gave no clue to his position in life: they might have been worn by a squire or by his gamekeeper; a dark velveteen dress and leathern gaiters. As Egremont caught his form, he threw his broad-brimmed country hat upon the ground and showed a frank and manly countenance. His complexion might in youth have been ruddy, but time and time's attendants, thought and passion, had paled it: his chesnut hair, faded, but not grey, still clustered over a noble brow; his features were regular and handsome, a well-formed nose, the square mouth and its white teeth, and the clear grey eye which befitted such an idiosyncrasy. His time of vigorous manhood, for he was much nearer forty than fifty years of age, perhaps better suited his athletic form, than the more supple and graceful season of youth.

Stretching his powerful arms in the air, and delivering himself of an exclamation which denoted his weariness, and which had broken the silence, he expressed to his companion his determination to rest himself under the shade of the yew in the contiguous garden, and inviting his friend to follow him, he took up his hat and moved away.

There was something in the appearance of the stranger that interested Egremont; and waiting till he had established himself in his pleasant resting place, Egremont descended into the cloister garden and determined to address him.

Book 2 Chapter 5

“You lean against an ancient trunk,” said Egremont, carelessly advancing to the stranger, who looked up at him without any expression of surprise, and then replied. “They say ‘tis the trunk beneath whose branches the monks encamped when they came to this valley to raise their building. It was their house, till with the wood and stone around them, their labour and their fine art, they piled up their abbey. And then they were driven out of it, and it came to this. Poor men! poor men!”

“They would hardly have forfeited their resting-place had they deserved to retain it,” said Egremont.

“They were rich. I thought it was poverty that was a crime,” replied the stranger in a tone of simplicity.

“But they had committed other crimes.”

“It may be so; we are very frail. But their history has been written by their enemies; they were condemned without a hearing; the people rose oftentimes in their behalf; and their property was divided with those on whose reports it was forfeited.”

“At any rate, it was a forfeiture which gave life to the community,” said Egremont; “the lands are held by active men and not by drones.”

“A drone is one who does not labour,” said the stranger; “whether he wear a cowl or a coronet, ‘tis the same to me. Somebody I suppose must own the land; though I have heard say that this individual tenure is not a necessity; but however this may be, I am not one who would object to the lord, provided he were a gentle one. All agree the Monastics were easy landlords; their rents were low; they granted leases in those days. Their tenants too might renew their term before their tenure ran out: so they were men of spirit and property. There were yeomen then, sir: the country was not divided into two classes, masters and slaves; there was some resting-place between luxury and misery. Comfort was an English habit then, not merely an English word.”

“And do you really think they were easier landlords than our present ones?” said Egremont, inquiringly.

“Human nature would tell us that, even if history did not confess it. The Monastics could possess no private property; they could save no money; they could bequeath nothing. They lived, received, and expended in common. The monastery too was a proprietor that never died and never wasted. The farmer had a deathless landlord then; not a harsh guardian, or a grinding mortgagee, or a dilatory master in chancery, all was certain; the manor had not to dread a change of lords, or the oaks to tremble at the axe of the squandering heir. How proud we are still in England of an old family, though, God knows, ‘tis rare to see one now. Yet the people like to say, We held under him, and his father and his grandfather before him: they know that such a tenure is a benefit. The abbot was ever the same. The monks were in short in every district a point of refuge for all who needed succour, counsel, and protection; a body of individuals having no cares of their own, with wisdom to guide the inexperienced, with wealth to relieve the suffering, and often with power to protect the oppressed.”

“You plead their cause with feeling,” said Egremont, not unmoved.

“It is my own; they were the sons of the People, like myself.”

“I had thought rather these monasteries were the resort of the younger branches of the aristocracy?” said Egremont.

“Instead of the pension list;” replied his companion, smiling, but not with bitterness. “Well, if we must have an aristocracy, I would sooner that its younger branches should be monks and nuns, than colonels without regiments, or housekeepers of royal palaces that exist only in name. Besides see what advantage to a minister if the unendowed aristocracy were thus provided for now. He need not, like a minister in these days, entrust the conduct of public affairs to individuals notoriously incompetent, appoint to the command of expeditions generals who never saw a field, make governors of colonies

out of men who never could govern themselves, or find an ambassador in a broken dandy or a blasted favourite. It is true that many of the monks and nuns were persons of noble birth. Why should they not have been? The aristocracy had their share; no more. They, like all other classes, were benefitted by the monasteries: but the list of the mitred abbots when they were suppressed, shows that the great majority of the heads of houses were of the people.”

“Well, whatever difference of opinion may exist on these points,” said Egremont, “there is one on which there can be no controversy: the monks were great architects.”

“Ah! there it is,” said the stranger, in a tone of plaintiveness; “if the world but only knew what they had lost! I am sure that not the faintest idea is generally prevalent of the appearance of England before and since the dissolution. Why, sir, in England and Wales alone, there were of these institutions of different sizes; I mean monasteries, and chantries and chapels, and great hospitals; considerably upwards of three thousand; all of them fair buildings, many of them of exquisite beauty. There were on an average in every shire at least twenty structures such as this was; in this great county double that number: establishments that were as vast and as magnificent and as beautiful as your Belvoirs and your Chatsworths, your Wentworths and your Stowes. Try to imagine the effect of thirty or forty Chatsworths in this county the proprietors of which were never absent. You complain enough now of absentees. The monks were never non-resident. They expended their revenue among those whose labour had produced it. These holy men too built and planted as they did everything else for posterity: their churches were cathedrals; their schools colleges; their halls and libraries the muniment rooms of kingdoms; their woods and waters, their farms and gardens, were laid out and disposed on a scale and in a spirit that are now extinct: they made the country beautiful, and the people proud of their country.”

“Yet if the monks were such public benefactors, why did not the people rise in their favour?”

“They did, but too late. They struggled for a century, but they struggled against property and they were beat. As long as the monks existed, the people, when aggrieved, had property on their side. And now ‘tis all over,” said the stranger; “and travellers come and stare at these ruins, and think themselves very wise to moralize over time. They are the children of violence, not of time. It is war that created these ruins, civil war, of all our civil wars the most inhuman, for it was waged with the unresisting. The monasteries were taken by storm, they were sacked, gutted, battered with warlike instruments, blown up with gunpowder; you may see the marks of the blast against the new tower here. Never was such a plunder. The whole face of the country for a century was that of a land recently invaded by a ruthless enemy; it was worse than the Norman conquest; nor has England ever lost this character of ravage. I don’t know whether the union workhouses will remove it. They are building something for the people at last. After an experiment of three centuries, your gaols being full, and your treadmills losing something of their virtue, you have given us a substitute for the monasteries.”

“You lament the old faith,” said Egremont, in a tone of respect.

“I am not viewing the question as one of faith,” said the stranger. “It is not as a matter of religion, but as a matter of right, that I am considering it: as a matter, I should say, of private right and public happiness. You might have changed if you thought fit the religion of the abbots as you changed the religion of the bishops: but you had no right to deprive men of their property, and property moreover which under their administration so mainly contributed to the welfare of the community.”

“As for community,” said a voice which proceeded neither from Egremont nor the stranger, “with the monasteries expired the only type that we ever had in England of such an intercourse. There is no community in England; there is aggregation, but aggregation under circumstances which make it rather a dissociating, than an uniting, principle.”

It was a still voice that uttered these words, yet one of a peculiar character; one of those voices that instantly arrest attention: gentle and yet solemn, earnest yet unimpassioned. With a step as whispering as his tone, the man who had been kneeling by the tomb, had unobserved joined his associate and Egremont. He hardly reached the middle height; his form slender, but well proportioned;

his pale countenance, slightly marked with the small pox, was redeemed from absolute ugliness by a highly-intellectual brow, and large dark eyes that indicated deep sensibility and great quickness of apprehension. Though young, he was already a little bald; he was dressed entirely in black; the fairness of his linen, the neatness of his beard, his gloves much worn, yet carefully mended, intimated that his very faded garments were the result of necessity rather than of negligence.

“You also lament the dissolution of these bodies,” said Egremont.

“There is so much to lament in the world in which we live,” said the younger of the strangers, “that I can spare no pang for the past.”

“Yet you approve of the principle of their society; you prefer it, you say, to our existing life.”

“Yes; I prefer association to gregariousness.”

“That is a distinction,” said Egremont, musingly.

“It is a community of purpose that constitutes society,” continued the younger stranger; “without that, men may be drawn into contiguity, but they still continue virtually isolated.”

“And is that their condition in cities?”

“It is their condition everywhere; but in cities that condition is aggravated. A density of population implies a severer struggle for existence, and a consequent repulsion of elements brought into too close contact. In great cities men are brought together by the desire of gain. They are not in a state of co-operation, but of isolation, as to the making of fortunes; and for all the rest they are careless of neighbours. Christianity teaches us to love our neighbour as ourself; modern society acknowledges no neighbour.”

“Well, we live in strange times,” said Egremont, struck by the observation of his companion, and relieving a perplexed spirit by an ordinary exclamation, which often denotes that the mind is more stirring than it cares to acknowledge, or at the moment is capable to express.

“When the infant begins to walk, it also thinks that it lives in strange times,” said his companion.

“Your inference?” asked Egremont.

“That society, still in its infancy, is beginning to feel its way.”

“This is a new reign,” said Egremont, “perhaps it is a new era.”

“I think so,” said the younger stranger.

“I hope so,” said the elder one.

“Well, society may be in its infancy,” said Egremont slightly smiling; “but, say what you like, our Queen reigns over the greatest nation that ever existed.”

“Which nation?” asked the younger stranger, “for she reigns over two.”

The stranger paused; Egremont was silent, but looked inquiringly.

“Yes,” resumed the younger stranger after a moment’s interval. “Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other’s habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws.”

“You speak of—” said Egremont, hesitatingly.

“THE RICH AND THE POOR.”

At this moment a sudden flush of rosy light, suffusing the grey ruins, indicated that the sun had just fallen; and through a vacant arch that overlooked them, alone in the resplendent sky, glittered the twilight star. The hour, the scene, the solemn stillness and the softening beauty, repressed controversy, induced even silence. The last words of the stranger lingered in the ear of Egremont; his musing spirit was teeming with many thoughts, many emotions; when from the Lady Chapel there rose the evening hymn to the Virgin. A single voice; but tones of almost supernatural sweetness; tender and solemn, yet flexible and thrilling.

Egremont started from his reverie. He would have spoken, but he perceived that the elder of the strangers had risen from his resting-place, and with downcast eyes and crossed arms, was on his knees. The other remained standing in his former posture.

The divine melody ceased; the elder stranger rose; the words were on the lips of Egremont, that would have asked some explanation of this sweet and holy mystery, when in the vacant and star-lit arch on which his glance was fixed, he beheld a female form. She was apparently in the habit of a Religious, yet scarcely could be a nun, for her veil, if indeed it were a veil, had fallen on her shoulders, and revealed her thick tresses of long fair hair. The blush of deep emotion lingered on a countenance, which though extremely young, was impressed with a character of almost divine majesty; while her dark eyes and long dark lashes, contrasting with the brightness of her complexion and the luxuriance of her radiant locks, combined to produce a beauty as rare as it is choice; and so strange, that Egremont might for a moment have been pardoned for believing her a seraph, that had lighted on this sphere, or the fair phantom of some saint haunting the sacred ruins of her desecrated fane.

Book 2 Chapter 6

“I understand, then,” said Lord Marney to his brother, as on the evening of the same day they were seated together in the drawing-room, in close converse “I understand then, that you have in fact paid nothing, and that my mother will give you a thousand pounds. That won’t go very far.”

“It will hardly pay for the chairing,” said Egremont; “the restoration of the family influence was celebrated on so great a scale.”

“The family influence must be supported,” said Lord Marney, “and my mother will give you a thousand pounds; as I said, that will not do much for you, but I like her spirit. Contests are very expensive things, yet I quite approve of what you have done, especially as you won. It is a great thing in these ten pound days to win your first contest, and shows powers of calculation which I respect. Everything in this world is calculation; there is no such thing as luck, depend upon it; and if you go on calculating with equal exactness, you must succeed in life. Now the question is, what is to be done with your election bills?”

“Exactly.”

“You want to know what I will do for you, or rather what I can do for you; that is the point. My inclination of course is to do everything for you; but when I calculate my resources, I may find that they are not equal to my inclination.”

“I am sure, George, you will do everything, and more than everything you ought.”

“I am extremely pleased about this thousand pounds of my mother, Charles.”

“Most admirable of her! But she always is so generous!”

“Her jointure has been most regularly paid,” continued Lord Marney. “Always be exact in your payments, Charles. There is no end to the good it produces. Now if I had not been so regular in paying my mother her jointure, she would not in all probability have been able to have given you this thousand pounds; and, therefore, to a certain extent, you are indebted for this thousand pounds to me.”

Egremont drew up a little, but said nothing.

“I am obliged to pay my mother her jointure, whether ricks are burnt or not,” said Lord Marney. “It’s very hard, don’t you think so?”

“But these ricks were Bingley’s?”

“But he was not insured, and he will want some reduction in his rent, and if I do not see fit to allow it him, which I probably shall not, for he ought to have calculated on these things, I have ricks of my own, and they may be burnt any night.”

“But you, of course, are insured?”

“No, I am not; I calculate ‘tis better to run the risk.”

“I wonder why ricks are burnt now, and were not in old days,” said Egremont.

“Because there is a surplus population in the kingdom,” said Lord Marney, “and no rural police in the county.”

“You were speaking of the election, George,” said Egremont, not without reluctance, yet anxious, as the ice had been broken, to bring the matter to a result. Lord Marney, before the election, had written, in reply to his mother consulting him on the step a letter with which she was delighted, but which Egremont at the time could have wished to have been more explicit. However in the excitement attendant on a first contest, and influenced by the person whose judgment always swayed, and, in the present case, was peculiarly entitled to sway him, he stifled his scruples, and persuaded himself that he was a candidate not only with the sanction, but at the instance, of his brother. “You were speaking of the election, George,” said Egremont.

“About the election, Charles. Well, the long and short of it is this: that I wish to see you comfortable. To be harassed about money is one of the most disagreeable incidents of life. It ruffles the temper, lowers the spirits, disturbs the rest, and finally breaks up one’s health. Always, if you

possibly can, keep square. And if by any chance you do find yourself in a scrape, come to me. There is nothing under those circumstances like the advice of a cool-headed friend.”

“As valuable as the assistance of a cold-hearted one,” thought Egremont, who did not fancy too much the tone of this conversation.

“But there is one thing of which you must particularly beware,” continued Lord Marney, “there is one thing worse even than getting into difficulties—patching them up. The patching-up system is fatal; it is sure to break down; you never get clear. Now, what I want to do for you, Charles, is to put you right altogether. I want to see you square and more than square, in a position which will for ever guarantee you from any annoyance of this kind.”

“He is a good fellow after all,” thought Egremont.

“That thousand pounds of my mother was very a propos,” said Lord Marney; “I suppose it was a sop that will keep them all right till we have made our arrangements.”

“Oh! there is no pressure of that kind,” said Egremont; “if I see my way, and write to them, of course they will be quite satisfied.”

“Excellent,” said Lord Marney; “and nothing could be more convenient to me, for, between ourselves, my balances are very low at this moment. The awful expenditure of keeping up this place! And then such terrible incumbrances as I came to!”

“Incumbrances, George! Why, I thought you had not any. There was not a single mortgage.”

“No mortgages; they are nothing; you find them, you get used to them, and you calculate accordingly. You quite forget the portions for younger children.”

“Yes; but you had plenty of ready money for them.”

“I had to pay them though,” said Lord Marney. “Had I not, I might have bought Grimblethorpe with the money; such an opportunity will never occur again.”

“But you talked of incumbrances,” said Egremont.

“Ah! my dear fellow,” said Lord Marney, “you don’t know what it is to have to keep up an estate like this; and very lucky for you. It is not the easy life you dream of. There’s buildings—I am ruined in buildings—our poor dear father thought he left me Marney without an incumbrance; why, there was not a barn on the whole estate that was weather-proof; not a farm-house that was not half in ruins. What I have spent in buildings! And draining! Though I make my own tiles, draining, my dear fellow, is a something of which you have not the least idea!”

“Well,” said Egremont, anxious to bring his brother back to the point, “you think, then, I had better write to them and say—”

“Ah! now for your business,” said Lord Marney. “Now, I will tell you what I can do for you. I was speaking to Arabella about it last night; she quite approves my idea. You remember the De Mowbrays? Well, we are going to stay at Mowbray Castle, and you are to go with us. It is the first time they have received company since their great loss. Ah! you were abroad at the time, and so you are behind hand. Lord Mowbray’s only son, Fitz-Warene, you remember him, a deuced clever fellow, he died about a year ago, in Greece, of a fever. Never was such a blow! His two sisters, Lady Joan and Lady Maud, are looked upon as the greatest heiresses in the kingdom; but I know Mowbray well; he will make an eldest son of his eldest daughter. She will have it all; she is one of Arabella’s dearest friends; and you are to marry her.”

Egremont stared at his brother, who patted him on the back with an expression of unusual kindness, and adding, “You have no idea what a load this has taken off my mind, my dear Charles; so great has my anxiety always been about you, particularly of late. To see you lord of Mowbray Castle will realize my fondest hopes. That is a position fit for a man, and I know none more worthy of it than yourself, though I am your brother who say so. Now let us come and speak to Arabella about it.”

So saying, Lord Marney, followed somewhat reluctantly by his brother, advanced to the other end of the drawing-room, where his wife was employed with her embroidery-frame, and seated next

to her young friend, Miss Poinsett, who was playing chess with Captain Grouse, a member of the chess club, and one of the most capital performers extant.

“Well, Arabella,” said Lord Marney, “it is all settled; Charles agrees with me about going to Mowbray Castle, and I think the sooner we go the better. What do you think of the day after to-morrow? That will suit me exactly, and therefore I think we had better fix on it. We will consider it settled.”

Lady Marney looked embarrassed, and a little distressed. Nothing could be more unexpected by her than this proposition; nothing more inconvenient than the arrangement. It was very true that Lady Joan Fitz-Warene had invited them to Mowbray, and she had some vague intention, some day or other, of deliberating whether they should avail themselves of this kindness; but to decide upon going, and upon going instantly, without the least consultation, the least inquiry as to the suitability of the arrangement, the visit of Miss Poinsett abruptly and ungraciously terminated, for example—all this was vexatious, distressing: a mode of management which out of the simplest incidents of domestic life contrived to extract some degree of perplexity and annoyance.

“Do not you think, George,” said Lady Marney, “that we had better talk it over a little?”

“Not at all,” said Lord Marney: “Charles will go, and it quite suits me, and therefore what necessity for any consultation?”

“Oh! if you and Charles like to go, certainly.” said Lady Marney in a hesitating tone; “only I shall be very sorry to lose your society.”

“How do you mean lose our society Arabella? Of course you must go with us. I particularly want you to go. You are Lady Joan’s most intimate friend; I believe there is no one she likes so much.”

“I cannot go the day after to-morrow,” said Lady Marney, speaking in a whisper, and looking volumes of deprecation.

“I cannot help it,” said Lord Marney; “you should have told me this before. I wrote to Mowbray to-day, that we should be with him the day after to-morrow, and stay a week.”

“But you never mentioned it to me,” said Lady Marney, slightly blushing and speaking in a tone of gentle reproach.

“I should like to know when I am to find time to mention the contents of every letter I write,” said Lord Marney; “particularly with all the vexatious business I have had on my hands to-day. But so it is; the more one tries to save you trouble, the more discontented you get.”

“No, not discontented, George.”

“I do not know what you call discontented; but when a man has made every possible arrangement to please you and every body, and all his plans are to be set aside merely because the day he has fixed on does not exactly suit your fancy, if that be not discontent, I should like very much to know what is, Arabella.”

Lady Marney did not reply. Always sacrificed, always yielding, the moment she attempted to express an opinion, she ever seemed to assume the position not of the injured but the injurer.

Arabella was a woman of abilities, which she had cultivated. She had excellent sense, and possessed many admirable qualities; she was far from being devoid of sensibility; but her sweet temper shrank from controversy, and Nature had not endowed her with a spirit which could direct and control. She yielded without a struggle to the arbitrary will and unreasonable caprice of a husband, who was scarcely her equal in intellect, and far her inferior in all the genial qualities of our nature, but who governed her by his iron selfishness.

Lady Marney absolutely had no will of her own. A hard, exact, literal, bustling, acute being environed her existence; directed, planned, settled everything. Her life was a series of petty sacrifices and balked enjoyments. If her carriage were at the door, she was never certain that she would not have to send it away; if she had asked some friends to her house, the chances were she would have to put them off; if she were reading a novel, Lord Marney asked her to copy a letter; if she were going to the opera, she found that Lord Marney had got seats for her and some friend in the House

of Lords, and seemed expecting the strongest expressions of delight and gratitude from her for his unmasked and inconvenient kindness. Lady Marney had struggled against this tyranny in the earlier days of their union. Innocent, inexperienced Lady Marney! As if it were possible for a wife to contend against a selfish husband, at once sharp-witted and blunt-hearted! She had appealed to him, she had even reproached him; she had wept, once she had knelt. But Lord Marney looked upon these demonstrations as the disordered sensibility of a girl unused to the marriage state, and ignorant of the wise authority of husbands, of which he deemed himself a model. And so, after a due course of initiation, Lady Marney invisible for days, plunged in remorseful reveries in the mysteries of her boudoir, and her lord dining at his club and going to the minor theatres; the countess was broken in, and became the perfect wife of a perfect husband.

Lord Marney, who was fond of chess, turned out Captain Grouse, and very gallantly proposed to finish his game with Miss Poinsett, which Miss Poinsett, who understood Lord Marney as well as he understood chess, took care speedily to lose, so that his lordship might encounter a champion worthy of him. Egremont seated by his sister-in-law, and anxious by kind words to soothe the irritation which he had observed with pain his brother create, entered into easy talk, and after some time, said, "I find you have been good enough to mould my destiny."

Lady Marney looked a little surprised, and then said, "How so?"

"You have decided on I hear the most important step of my life."

"Indeed you perplex me."

"Lady Joan Fitz-Warene, your friend—"

The countess blushed; the name was a clue which she could follow, but Egremont nevertheless suspected that the idea had never previously occurred to her. Lady Joan she described as not beautiful; certainly not beautiful; nobody would consider her beautiful, many would indeed think her quite the reverse; and yet she had a look, one particular look when according to Lady Marney, she was more than beautiful. But she was very clever, very indeed, something quite extraordinary.

"Accomplished?"

"Oh! far beyond that; I have heard even men say that no one knew so much."

"A regular blue?"

"Oh! no; not at all a blue; not that kind of knowledge. But languages and learned books; Arabic, and Hebrew, and old manuscripts. And then she has an observatory, and was the first person who discovered the comet. Dr Buckland swears by her; and she corresponds with Arago."

"And her sister, is she the same?"

"Lady Maud: she is very religious. I do not know her so well."

"Is she pretty?"

"Some people admire her very much."

"I never was at Mowbray. What sort of a place is it?"

"Oh! it is very grand," said Lady Marney; "but like all places in the manufacturing districts, very disagreeable. You never have a clear sky. Your toilette table is covered with blacks; the deer in the park seem as if they had bathed in a lake of Indian ink; and as for the sheep, you expect to see chimney-sweeps for the shepherds."

"And do you really mean to go on Thursday?" said Egremont: "I think we had better put it off."

"We must go," said Lady Marney, with a sort of sigh, and shaking her head.

"Let me speak to Marney."

"Oh! no. We must go. I am annoyed about this dear little Poinsett: she has been to stay with me so very often, and she has only been here three days. When she comes in again, I wish you would ask her to sing, Charles."

Soon the dear little Poinsett was singing, much gratified by being invited to the instrument by Mr Egremont, who for a few minutes hung over her, and then evidently under the influence of her tones, walked up and down the room, and only speaking to beg that she would continue her charming

performances. Lady Marney was engrossed with her embroidery; her lord and the captain with their game.

And what was Egremont thinking of? Of Mowbray be you sure. And of Lady Joan or Lady Maud? Not exactly. Mowbray was the name of the town to which the strangers he had met with in the Abbey were bound. It was the only piece of information that he had been able to obtain of them; and that casually.

When the fair vision of the starlit arch, about to descend to her two companions, perceived that they were in conversation with a stranger, she hesitated, and in a moment withdrew. Then the elder of the travellers, exchanging a glance with his friend, bid good even to Egremont.

“Our way perhaps lies the same,” said Egremont.

“I should deem not,” said the stranger, “nor are we alone.”

“And we must be stirring, for we have far to go,” said he who was dressed in black.

“My journey is very brief,” said Egremont, making a desperate effort to invite communication; “and I am on horseback!”

“And we on foot,” said the elder; “nor shall we stop till we reach Mowbray;” and with a slight salute, they left Egremont alone. There was something in the manner of the elder stranger which repressed the possibility of Egremont following him. Leaving then the cloister garden in another direction, he speculated on meeting them outside the abbey. He passed through the Lady’s chapel. The beautiful Religious was not there. He gained the west front; no one was visible. He took a rapid survey of each side of the abbey; not a being to be recognized. He fancied they must have advanced towards the Abbey Farm; yet they might have proceeded further on in the dale. Perplexed, he lost time. Finally he proceeded towards the farm, but did not overtake them; reached it, but learned nothing of them; and arrived at his brother’s full of a strange yet sweet perplexity.

Book 2 Chapter 7

In a commercial country like England, every half century develops some new and vast source of public wealth, which brings into national notice a new and powerful class. A couple of centuries ago, a Turkey merchant was the great creator of wealth; the West Indian Planter followed him. In the middle of the last century appeared the Nabob. These characters in their zenith in turn merged in the land, and became English aristocrats; while the Levant decaying, the West Indies exhausted, and Hindostan plundered, the breeds died away, and now exist only in our English comedies from Wycherly and Congreve to Cumberland and Morton. The expenditure of the revolutionary war produced the Loanmonger, who succeeded the Nabob; and the application of science to industry developed the Manufacturer, who in turn aspires to be “large-acred,” and always will, as long as we have a territorial constitution; a better security for the preponderance of the landed interest than any corn law, fixed or fluctuating.

Of all these characters, the one that on the whole made the largest fortunes in the most rapid manner,—and we do not forget the marvels of the Waterloo loan, or the miracles of Manchester during the continental blockade—was the Anglo-East Indian about the time that Hastings was first appointed to the great viceroyalty. It was not unusual for men in positions so obscure that their names had never reached the public in this country, and who yet had not been absent from their native land for a longer period than the siege of Troy, to return with their million.

One of the most fortunate of this class of obscure adventurers was a certain John Warren. A very few years before the breaking out of the American war, he was a waiter at a celebrated club in St James’s Street: a quick yet steady young fellow; assiduous, discreet, and very civil. In this capacity, he pleased a gentleman who was just appointed to the government of Madras, and who wanted a valet. Warren, though prudent, was adventurous; and accepted the opening which he believed fortune offered him. He was prescient. The voyage in those days was an affair of six months. During this period, Warren still more ingratiated himself with his master. He wrote a good hand, and his master a very bad one. He had a natural talent for accounts; a kind of information which was useful to his employer. He arrived at Madras, no longer a valet, but a private secretary.

His master went out to make a fortune; but he was indolent, and had indeed none of the qualities for success, except his great position. Warren had every quality but that. The basis of the confederacy therefore was intelligible; it was founded on mutual interests and cemented by reciprocal assistance. The governor granted monopolies to the secretary, who apportioned a due share to his sleeping partner. There appeared one of those dearths not unusual in Hindostan; the population of the famished province cried out for rice; the stores of which, diminished by nature, had for months mysteriously disappeared. A provident administration it seems had invested the public revenue in its benevolent purchase; the misery was so excessive that even pestilence was anticipated, when the great forestallers came to the rescue of the people over whose destinies they presided; and at the same time fed and pocketed millions.

This was the great stroke of the financial genius of Warren. He was satisfied. He longed once more to see St James’s Street, and to become a member of the club, where he had once been a waiter. But he was the spoiled child of fortune, who would not so easily spare him. The governor died, and had appointed his secretary his sole executor. Not that his excellency particularly trusted his agent, but he dared not confide the knowledge of his affairs to any other individual. The estate was so complicated, that Warren offered the heirs a good round sum for his quittance, and to take the settlement upon himself. India so distant, and Chancery so near—the heirs accepted the proposition. Winding up this estate, Warren avenged the cause of plundered provinces; and the House of Commons itself, with Burke and Francis at its head, could scarcely have mulcted the late governor more severely.

A Mr Warren, of whom no one had ever heard except that he was a nabob, had recently returned from India and purchased a large estate in the north of England, was returned to Parliament one of the representatives of a close borough which he had purchased: a quiet, gentlemanlike, middle-aged man, with no decided political opinions; and, as parties were then getting very equal, of course very much courted. The throes of Lord North's administration were commencing. The minister asked the new member to dine with him, and found the new member singularly free from all party prejudices. Mr Warren was one of those members who announced their determination to listen to the debates and to be governed by the arguments. All complimented him, all spoke to him. Mr Fox declared that he was a most superior man; Mr Burke said that these were the men who could alone save the country. Mrs Crewe asked him to supper; he was caressed by the most brilliant of duchesses.

At length there arrived one of those fierce trials of strength, which precede the fall of a minister, but which sometimes from peculiar circumstances, as in the instances of Walpole and Lord North, are not immediate in their results. How would Warren vote? was the great question. He would listen to the arguments. Burke was full of confidence that he should catch Warren. The day before the debate there was a levee, which Mr Warren attended. The sovereign stopped him, spoke to him, smiled on him, asked him many questions: about himself, the House of Commons, how he liked it, how he liked England. There was a flutter in the circle; a new favourite at court.

The debate came off, the division took place. Mr Warren voted for the minister. Burke denounced him; the king made him a baronet.

Sir John Warren made a great alliance, at least for him; he married the daughter of an Irish earl; became one of the king's friends; supported Lord Shelburne, threw over Lord Shelburne, had the tact early to discover that Mr Pitt was the man to stick to, stuck to him. Sir John Warren bought another estate, and picked up another borough. He was fast becoming a personage. Throughout the Indian debates he kept himself extremely quiet; once indeed in vindication of Mr Hastings, whom he greatly admired, he ventured to correct Mr Francis on a point of fact with which he was personally acquainted. He thought that it was safe, but he never spoke again. He knew not the resources of vindictive genius or the powers of a malignant imagination. Burke owed the Nabob a turn for the vote which had gained him a baronetcy. The orator seized the opportunity and alarmed the secret conscience of the Indian adventurer by his dark allusions, and his fatal familiarity with the subject.

Another estate however and another borough were some consolation for this little misadventure; and in time the French Revolution, to Sir John's great relief, turned the public attention for ever from Indian affairs. The Nabob from the faithful adherent of Mr Pitt had become even his personal friend. The wits indeed had discovered that he had been a waiter; and endless were the epigrams of Fitzpatrick and the jokes of Hare; but Mr Pitt cared nothing about the origin of his supporters. On the contrary, Sir John was exactly the individual from whom the minister meant to carve out his plebeian aristocracy; and using his friend as a feeler before he ventured on his greater operations, the Nabob one morning was transformed into an Irish baron.

The new Baron figured in his patent as Lord Fitz-Warene, his Norman origin and descent from the old barons of this name having been discovered at Herald's college. This was a rich harvest for Fitzpatrick and Hare; but the public gets accustomed to everything, and has an easy habit of faith. The new Baron cared nothing for ridicule, for he was working for posterity. He was compensated for every annoyance by the remembrance that the St James's Street waiter was ennobled, and by his determination that his children should rank still higher in the proud peerage of his country. So he obtained the royal permission to resume the surname and arms of his ancestors, as well as their title.

There was an ill-natured story set afloat, that Sir John owed this promotion to having lent money to the minister; but this was a calumny. Mr Pitt never borrowed money of his friends. Once indeed, to save his library, he took a thousand pounds from an individual on whom he had conferred high rank and immense promotion: and this individual, who had the minister's bond when Mr Pitt died, insisted on his right, and actually extracted the 1,000 l. from the insolvent estate of his magnificent

patron. But Mr Pitt always preferred an usurer to a friend; and to the last day of his life borrowed money at fifty per cent.

The Nabob departed this life before the Minister, but he lived long enough to realize his most aspiring dream. Two years before his death the Irish baron was quietly converted into an English peer; and without exciting any attention, all the squibs of Fitzpatrick, all the jokes of Hare, quite forgotten, the waiter of the St James's Street club took his seat in the most natural manner possible in the House of Lords.

The great estate of the late Lord Fitz-Warene was situated at Mowbray, a village which principally belonged to him, and near which he had raised a gothic castle, worthy of his Norman name and ancestry. Mowbray was one of those places which during the long war had expanded from an almost unknown village to a large and flourishing manufacturing town; a circumstance, which, as Lady Marney observed, might have somewhat deteriorated the atmosphere of the splendid castle, but which had nevertheless doubled the vast rental of its lord. He who had succeeded to his father was Altamont Belvidere (named after his mother's family) Fitz-Warene, Lord Fitz-Warene. He was not deficient in abilities, though he had not his father's talents, but he was over-educated for his intellect; a common misfortune. The new Lord Fitz-Warene was the most aristocratic of breathing beings. He most fully, entirely, and absolutely believed in his pedigree; his coat of arms was emblazoned on every window, embroidered on every chair, carved in every corner. Shortly after his father's death he was united to the daughter of a ducal house, by whom he had a son and two daughters, christened by names which the ancient records of the Fitz-Warenes authorised. His son, who gave promise of abilities which might have rendered the family really distinguished, was Valence; his daughters, Joan and Maud. All that seemed wanting to the glory of the house was a great distinction of which a rich peer, with six seats in the House of Commons, could not ultimately despair. Lord Fitz-Warene aspired to rank among the earls of England. But the successors of Mr Pitt were strong; they thought the Fitz-Warenes had already been too rapidly advanced; it was whispered that the king did not like the new man; that his majesty thought him pompous, full of pretence, in short, a fool. But though the successors of Mr Pitt managed to govern the country for twenty years and were generally very strong, in such an interval of time however good their management or great their luck, there were inevitably occasions when they found themselves in difficulties, when it was necessary to conciliate the lukewarm or to reward the devoted. Lord Fitz-Warene well understood how to avail himself of these occasions; it was astonishing how conscientious and scrupulous he became during Walcheren expeditions, Manchester massacres, Queen's trials. Every scrape of the government was a step in the ladder to the great borough-monger. The old king too had disappeared from the stage; and the tawdry grandeur of the great Norman peer rather suited George the Fourth. He was rather a favourite at the Cottage; they wanted his six votes for Canning; he made his terms; and one of the means by which we got a man of genius for a minister, was elevating Lord Fitz-Warene in the peerage, by the style and title of Earl de Mowbray of Mowbray Castle.

Book 2 Chapter 8

We must now for a while return to the strangers of the Abbey ruins. When the two men had joined the beautiful Religious, whose apparition had so startled Egremont, they all three quitted the Abbey by a way which led them by the back of the cloister garden, and so on by the bank of the river for about a hundred yards, when they turned up the winding glen of a dried-up tributary stream. At the head of the glen, at which they soon arrived, was a beer-shop, screened by some huge elms from the winds that blew over the vast moor, which, except in the direction of Mardale, now extended as far as the eye could reach. Here the companions stopped, the beautiful Religious seated herself on a stone bench beneath the trees, while the elder stranger calling out to the inmate of the house to apprise him of his return, himself proceeded to a neighbouring shed, whence he brought forth a very small rough pony with a rude saddle, but one evidently intended for a female rider.

“It is well,” said the taller of the men “that I am not a member of a temperance society like you, Stephen, or it would be difficult to reward this good man for his care of our steed. I will take a cup of the drink of Saxon kings.” Then leading up the pony to the Religious, he placed her on its back with gentleness and much natural grace, saying at the same time in a subdued tone, “And you—shall I bring you a glass of nature’s wine?”

“I have drank of the spring of the Holy Abbey,” said the Religious, “and none other must touch my lips this eve.”

“Come, our course must be brisk,” said the elder of the men as he gave up his glass to their host and led off the pony, Stephen walking on its other side.

Though the sun had fallen, the twilight was still glowing, and even on this wide expanse the air was still. The vast and undulating surface of the brown and purple moor, varied occasionally by some fantastic rocks, gleamed in the shifting light. Hesperus was the only star that yet was visible, and seemed to move before them and lead them on their journey.

“I hope,” said the Religious, turning to the elder stranger, “that if ever we regain our right, my father, and that we ever can save by the interposition of divine will seems to me clearly impossible, that you will never forget how bitter it is to be driven from the soil; and that you will bring back the people to the land.”

“I would pursue our right for no other cause,” said the father. “After centuries of sorrow and degradation, it should never be said, that we had no sympathy with the sad and the oppressed.”

“After centuries of sorrow and degradation,” said Stephen, “let it not be said that you acquired your right only to create a baron or a squire.”

“Nay, thou shalt have thy way, Stephen,” said his companion, smiling, “if ever the good hour come. As many acres as thou chooseth for thy new Jerusalem.”

“Call it what you will, Walter,” replied Stephen; “but if I ever gain the opportunity of fully carrying the principle of association into practice, I will sing ‘Nunc me dimittas.’”

“Nunc me dimittas,” burst forth the Religious in a voice of thrilling melody, and she pursued for some minutes the divine canticle. Her companions gazed on her with an air of affectionate reverence as she sang; each instant the stars becoming brighter, the wide moor assuming a darker hue.

“Now, tell me, Stephen,” said the Religious, turning her head and looking round with a smile, “think you not it would be a fairer lot to bide this night at some kind monastery, than to be hastening now to that least picturesque of all creations, a railway station.”

“The railways will do as much for mankind as the monasteries did,” said Stephen.

“Had it not been for the railway, we should never have made our visit to Marney Abbey,” said the elder of the travellers.

“Nor seen its last abbot’s tomb,” said the Religious. “When I marked your name upon the stone, my father;—woe is me, but I felt sad indeed, that it was reserved for our blood to surrender to ruthless men that holy trust.”

“He never surrendered,” said her father. “He was tortured and hanged.”

“He is with the communion of saints,” said the Religious.

“I would I could see a communion of Men,” said Stephen, “and then there would be no more violence, for there would be no more plunder.”

“You must regain our lands for us, Stephen,” said the Religious; “promise me my father that I shall raise a holy house for pious women, if that ever hap.”

“We will not forget our ancient faith,” said her father, “the only old thing that has not left us.”

“I cannot understand,” said Stephen, “why you should ever have lost sight of these papers, Walter.”

“You see, friend, they were never in my possession; they were never mine when I saw them. They were my father’s; and he was jealous of all interference. He was a small yeoman, who had risen in the war time, well to do in the world, but always hankering after the old tradition that the lands were ours. This Hatton got hold of him; he did his work well, I have heard;—certain it is my father spared nothing. It is twenty-five years come Martinmas since he brought his writ of right; and though baffled, he was not beaten. But then he died; his affairs were in great confusion; he had mortgaged his land for his writ, and the war prices were gone. There were debts that could not be paid. I had no capital for a farm. I would not sink to be a labourer on the soil that had once been our own. I had just married; it was needful to make a great exertion. I had heard much of the high wages of this new industry; I left the land.”

“And the papers?”

“I never thought of them, or thought of them with disgust, as the cause of my ruin. Then when you came the other day, and showed me in the book that the last abbot of Marney was a Walter Gerard, the old feeling stirred again; and I could not help telling you that my fathers fought at Azincourt, though I was only the overlooker at Mr Trafford’s mill.”

“A good old name of the good old faith,” said the Religious; “and a blessing be on it.”

“We have cause to bless it,” said Gerard. “I thought it then something to serve a gentleman; and as for my daughter, she, by their goodness, was brought up in holy walls, which have made her what she is.”

“Nature made her what she is,” said Stephen in a low voice, and speaking not without emotion. Then he continued, in a louder and brisker tone, “But this Hatton—you know nothing of his whereabouts?”

“Never heard of him since. I had indeed about a year after my father’s death, cause to enquire after him; but he had quitted Mowbray, and none could give me tidings of him. He had lived I believe on our law-suit, and vanished with our hopes.”

After this, there was silence; each was occupied with his thoughts, while the influence of the soft night and starry hour induced to contemplation.

“I hear the murmur of the train,” said the Religious.

“’Tis the up-train,” said her father. “We have yet a quarter of an hour; we shall be in good time.”

So saying, he guided the pony to where some lights indicated the station of the railway, which here crossed the moor. There was just time to return the pony to the person at the station from whom it had been borrowed, and obtain their tickets, when the bell of the down-train sounded, and in a few minutes the Religious and her companions were on their way to Mowbray, whither a course of two hours carried them.

It was two hours to midnight when they arrived at Mowbray station, which was about a quarter of a mile from the town. Labour had long ceased; a beautiful heaven, clear and serene, canopied the

city of smoke and toil; in all directions rose the columns of the factories, dark and defined in the purple sky; a glittering star sometimes hovering by the crest of their tall and tapering forms.

The travellers proceeded in the direction of a suburb and approached the very high wall of an extensive garden. The moon rose as they reached it, tipped the trees with light, and revealed a lofty and centre portal, by the side of it a wicket at which Gerard rang. The wicket was quickly opened.

“I fear, holy sister,” said the Religious, “that I am even later than I promised.”

“Those that come in our lady’s name are ever welcome,” was the reply.

“Sister Marion,” said Gerard to the porteress, “we have been to visit a holy place.”

“All places are holy with holy thoughts, my brother.”

“Dear father, good night,” said the Religious; “the blessings of all the saints be on thee,—and on thee, Stephen, though thou dost not kneel to them.”

“Good night, mine own child,” said Gerard.

“I could believe in saints when I am with thee,” murmured Stephen; “Good night,—SYBIL.”

Book 2 Chapter 9

When Gerard and his friend quitted the convent they proceeded at a brisk pace, into the heart of the town. The streets were nearly empty; and with the exception of some occasional burst of brawl or merriment from a beer-shop, all was still. The chief street of Mowbray, called Castle Street after the ruins of the old baronial stronghold in its neighbourhood, was as significant of the present civilization of this community as the haughty keep had been of its ancient dependence. The dimensions of Castle Street were not unworthy of the metropolis: it traversed a great portion of the town, and was proportionately wide; its broad pavements and its blazing gas-lights indicated its modern order and prosperity; while on each side of the street rose huge warehouses, not as beautiful as the palaces of Venice, but in their way not less remarkable; magnificent shops; and here and there, though rarely, some ancient factory built among the fields in the infancy of Mowbray by some mill-owner not sufficiently prophetic of the future, or sufficiently confident in the energy and enterprise of his fellow-citizens, to foresee that the scene of his labours would be the future eye-sore of a flourishing posterity.

Pursuing their course along Castle Street for about a quarter of a mile, Gerard and Stephen turned down a street which intersected it, and so on, through a variety of ways and winding lanes, till they arrived at an open portion of the town, a district where streets and squares and even rows, disappeared, and where the tall chimneys and bulky barrack-looking buildings that rose in all directions, clustering yet isolated, announced that they were in the principal scene of the industry of Mowbray. Crossing this open ground they gained a suburb, but one of a very different description to that in which was situate the convent where they had parted with Sybil. This one was populous, noisy, and lighted. It was Saturday night; the streets were thronged; an infinite population kept swarming to and fro the close courts and pestilential cul-de-sacs that continually communicated with the streets by narrow archways, like the entrance of hives, so low that you were obliged to stoop for admission: while ascending to these same streets, from their dank and dismal dwellings by narrow flights of steps the subterranean nation of the cellars poured forth to enjoy the coolness of the summer night, and market for the day of rest. The bright and lively shops were crowded; and groups of purchasers were gathered round the stalls, that by the aid of glaring lamps and flaunting lanthorns, displayed their wares.

“Come, come, it’s a prime piece,” said a jolly looking woman, who was presiding at a stall which, though considerably thinned by previous purchasers, still offered many temptations to many who could not purchase.

“And so it is widow,” said a little pale man, wistfully.

“Come, come, it’s getting late, and your wife’s ill; you’re a good soul, we’ll say fi’pence a pound, and I’ll throw you the scrag end in for love.”

“No butcher’s meat to-morrow for us, widow,” said the man.

“And why not, neighbour? With your wages, you ought to live like a prize-fighter, or the mayor of Mowbray at least.”

“Wages!” said the man, “I wish you may get ‘em. Those villains, Shuffle and Screw, have sarved me with another bate ticket: and a pretty figure too.”

“Oh! the carnal monsters!” exclaimed the widow. “If their day don’t come, the bloody-minded knaves!”

“And for small cops, too! Small cops be hanged! Am I the man to send up a bad-bottomed cop, Widow Carey?”

“You sent up for snicks! I have known you man and boy John Hill these twenty summers, and never heard a word against you till you got into Shuffle and Screw’s mill. Oh! they are a bad yarn, John.”

“They do us all, widow. They pretends to give the same wages as the rest, and works it out in fines. You can’t come, and you can’t go, but there’s a fine; you’re never paid wages, but there’s a bate ticket. I’ve heard they keep their whole establishment on factory fines.”

“Soul alive, but those Shuffle and Screw are rotten, snickey, bad yarns,” said Mistress Carey. “Now ma’am, if you please; fi’pence ha’penny; no, ma’am, we’ve no weal left. Weal, indeed! you look very like a soul as feeds on weal,” continued Mrs Carey in an under tone as her declining customer moved away. “Well, it gets late,” said the widow, “and if you like to take this scrag end home to your wife neighbour Hill, we can talk of the rest next Saturday. And what’s your will, sir?” said the widow with a stern expression to a youth who now stopped at her stall.

He was about sixteen, with a lithe figure, and a handsome, faded, impudent face. His long, loose, white trousers gave him height; he had no waistcoat, but a pink silk handkerchief was twisted carelessly round his neck, and fastened with a very large pin, which, whatever were its materials, had unquestionably a very gorgeous appearance. A loose frock-coat of a coarse white cloth, and fastened by one button round his waist, completed his habiliments, with the addition of the covering to his head, a high-crowned dark-brown hat, which relieved his complexion, and heightened the effect of his mischievous blue eye.

“Well, you need not be so fierce, Mother Carey,” said the youth with an affected air of deprecation.

“Don’t mother me,” said the jolly widow with a kindling eye; “go to your own mother, who is dying in a back cellar without a winder, while you’ve got lodgings in a two pair.”

“Dying; she’s only drunk,” said the youth.

“And if she is only drunk,” rejoined Mrs Carey in a passion, “what makes her drink but toil; working from five o’clock in the morning to seven o’clock at night, and for the like of such as you.”

“That’s a good one,” said the youth; “I should like to know what my mother ever did for me, but give me treacle and laudanum when I was a babby to stop my tongue and fill my stomach; by the token of which, as my gal says, she stunted the growth of the prettiest figure in all Mowbray.” And here the youth drew himself up, and thrust his hands in the side pockets of his pea-jacket.

“Well, I never,” said Mrs Carey. “No; I never heard a thing like that!”

“What, not when you cut up the jackass and sold it for veal cutlets, mother.”

“Hold your tongue, Mr Imperence,” said the widow. “It’s very well known you’re no Christian, and who’ll believe what you say?”

“It’s very well known that I’m a man what pays his way,” said the boy, “and don’t keep a huckster’s stall to sell carrion by star-light; but live in a two pair, if you please, and has a wife and family, or as good.”

“O! you aggravating imp!” exclaimed the widow in despair, unable to wreak her vengeance on one who kept in a secure position, and whose movements were as nimble as his words.

“Why, Madam Carey, what has Dandy Mick done to thee?” said a good-humoured voice, it came from one of two factory girls who were passing her stall and stopped. They were gaily dressed, a light handkerchief tied under the chin, their hair scrupulously arranged; they wore coral neck-laces and earrings of gold.

“Ah! is it you, my child,” said the widow, who was a good-hearted creature. “The dandy has been giving me some of his imperence.”

“But I meant nothing, dame,” said Mick. “It was a joke,—only a joke.”

“Well, let it pass,” said Mrs Carey. “And where have you been this long time, my child; and who’s your friend?” she added in a lower tone.

“Well, I have left Mr Trafford’s mill,” said the girl.

“That’s a bad job,” said Mrs Carey; “for those Traffords are kind to their people. It’s a great thing for a young person to be in their mill.”

“So it is,” said the girl, “but then it was so dull. I can’t stand a country life, Mrs Carey. I must have company.”

“Well, I do love a bit of gossip myself,” said Mrs Carey, with great frankness.

“And then I’m no scholar,” said the girl, “and never could take to learning. And those Traffords had so many schools.”

“Learning is better than house and land,” said Mrs Carey; “though I’m no scholar myself; but then, in my time, things was different. But young persons—”

“Yes,” said Mick; “I don’t think I could get through the day, if it wurno’ for our Institute.”

“And what’s that?” asked Mrs Carey with a sneer.

“The Shoddy-Court Literary and Scientific, to be sure,” said Mick; “we have got fifty members, and take in three London papers; one ‘Northern Star’ and two ‘Moral Worlds.’”

“And where are you now, child?” continued the widow to the girl.

“I am at Wiggins and Webster’s,” said the girl; “and this is my partner. We keep house together; we have a very nice room in Arbour Court, No. 7, high up; it’s very airy. If you will take a dish of tea with us to-morrow, we expect some friends.”

“I take it kindly,” said Mrs Carey; “and so you keep house together! All the children keep house in these days. Times is changed indeed!”

“And we shall be happy to see you, Mick; and Julia, if you are not engaged;” continued the girl; and she looked at her friend, a pretty demure girl, who immediately said, but in a somewhat faltering tone, “Oh! that we shall.”

“And what are you going to do now, Caroline?” said Mick.

“Well, we had no thoughts; but I said to Harriet, as it is a fine night, let us walk about as long as we can and then to-morrow we will lie in bed till afternoon.”

“That’s all well eno’ in winter time with plenty of baccy,” said Mick, “but at this season of the year I must have life. The moment I came out I bathed in the river, and then went home and dressed,” he added in a satisfied tone; “and now I am going to the Temple. I’ll tell you what, Julia has been pricked to-day with a shuttle, ‘tis not much, but she can’t go out; I’ll stand treat, and take you and your friend to the Temple.”

“Well, that’s delight,” said Caroline. “There’s no one does the handsome thing like you, Dandy Mick, and I always say so. Oh! I love the Temple! ‘Tis so genteel! I was speaking of it to Harriet last night; she never was there. I proposed to go with her—but two girls alone,—you understand me. One does not like to be seen in these places, as if one kept no company.”

“Very true,” said Mick; “and now we’ll be off. Good night, widow.”

“You’ll remember us to-morrow evening,” said Caroline. “To-morrow evening! The Temple!” murmured Mrs Carey to herself. “I think the world is turned upside downwards in these parts. A brat like Mick Radley to live in a two pair, with a wife and family, or as good as he says; and this girl asks me to take a dish of tea with her and keeps house! Fathers and mothers goes for nothing,” continued Mrs Carey, as she took a very long pinch of snuff and deeply mused. “‘tis the children gets the wages,” she added after a profound pause, “and there it is.”

Book 2 Chapter 10

In the meantime Gerard and Stephen stopped before a tall, thin, stuccoed house, ballustraded and friezed, very much lighted both within and without, and, from the sounds that issued from it, and the persons who retired and entered, evidently a locality of great resort and bustle. A sign, bearing the title of the Cat and Fiddle, indicated that it was a place of public entertainment, and kept by one who owned the legal name of John Trottmann, though that was but a vulgar appellation, lost in his well-earned and far-famed title of Chaffing Jack.

The companions entered the spacious premises; and making their way to the crowded bar, Stephen, with a glance serious but which indicated intimacy, caught the eye of a comely lady, who presided over the mysteries, and said in a low voice, "Is he here?"

"In the Temple, Mr Morley, asking for you and your friend more than once. I think you had better go up. I know he wishes to see you."

Stephen whispered to Gerard and after a moment's pause, he asked the fair president for a couple of tickets for each of which he paid threepence; a sum however, according to the printed declaration of the voucher, convertible into potential liquid refreshments, no great compensation to a very strict member of the Temperance Society of Mowbray.

A handsome staircase with bright brass bannisters led them to an ample landing-place, on which opened a door, now closed and by which sat a boy who collected the tickets of those who would enter it. The portal was of considerable dimensions and of architectural pretension; it was painted of a bright green colour, the panels gilt. Within the pediment, described in letters of flaming gas, you read, "THE TEMPLE OF THE MUSES."

Gerard and Morley entered an apartment very long and sufficiently lofty, though rather narrow for such proportions. The ceiling was even richly decorated; the walls were painted, and by a brush of considerable power. Each panel represented some well-known scene from Shakespeare, Byron, or Scott: King Richard, Mazeppa, the Lady of the Lake were easily recognized: in one panel, Hubert menaced Arthur; here Haidee rescued Juan; and there Jeanie Deans curtsied before the Queen. The room was very full; some three or four hundred persons were seated in different groups at different tables, eating, drinking, talking, laughing, and even smoking, for notwithstanding the pictures and the gilding it was found impossible to forbid, though there were efforts to discourage, this practice, in the Temple of the Muses. Nothing however could be more decorous than the general conduct of the company, though they consisted principally of factory people. The waiters flew about with as much agility as if they were serving nobles. In general the noise was great, though not disagreeable; sometimes a bell rang and there was comparative silence, while a curtain drew up at the further end of the room, opposite to the entrance, and where there was a theatre, the stage raised at a due elevation, and adorned with side scenes from which issued a lady in a fancy dress who sang a favourite ballad; or a gentleman elaborately habited in a farmer's costume of the old comedy, a bob-wig, silver buttons and buckles, and blue stockings, and who favoured the company with that melancholy effusion called a comic song. Some nights there was music on the stage; a young lady in a white robe with a golden harp, and attended by a gentleman in black mustachios. This was when the principal harpiste of the King of Saxony and his first fiddler happened to be passing through Mowbray, merely by accident, or on a tour of pleasure and instruction, to witness the famous scenes of British industry. Otherwise the audience of the Cat and Fiddle, we mean the Temple of the Muses, were fain to be content with four Bohemian brothers, or an equal number of Swiss sisters. The most popular amusements however were the "Thespian recitations:" by amateurs, or novices who wished to become professional. They tried their metal on an audience which could be critical.

A sharp waiter, with a keen eye on the entering guests, immediately saluted Gerard and his friend, with profuse offers of hospitality: insisting that they wanted much refreshment; that they were

both very hungry and very thirsty: that, if not hungry, they should order something to drink that would give them an appetite: if not inclined to quaff, something to eat that would make them athirst. In the midst of these embarrassing attentions, he was pushed aside by his master with, “There, go; hands wanted at the upper end; two American gentlemen from Lowell singing out for Sherry Cobler; don’t know what it is; give them our bar mixture; if they complain, say it’s the Mowbray slap-bang, and no mistake. Must have a name, Mr Morley; name’s everything; made the fortune of the Temple: if I had called it the Saloon, it never would have filled, and perhaps the magistrates never have granted a licence.”

The speaker was a very portly man who had passed the maturity of manhood, but active as Harlequin. He had a well-favoured countenance; fair, good-humoured, but very sly. He was dressed like the head butler of the London Tavern, and was particular as to his white waistcoats and black silk stockings, punctilious as to his knee-buckles, proud of his diamond pin; that is to say when he officiated at the Temple.

“Your mistress told us we should find you here,” said Stephen, “and that you wished to see us.

“Plenty to tell you,” said their host putting his finger to his nose. “If information is wanted in this part of the world, I flatter myself—Come, Master Gerard, here’s a table; what shall I call for? glass of the Mowbray slap-bang? No better; the receipt has been in our family these fifty years. Mr Morley I know won’t join us. Did you say a cup of tea, Mr Morley? Water, only water; well, that’s strange. Boy alive there, do you hear me call? Water wanted, glass of water for the Secretary of the Mowbray Temperance and Teatotal. Sing it out. I like titled company. Brush!”

“And so you can give us some information about this—”

“Be back directly.” exclaimed their host: and darting off with a swift precision, that carried him through a labyrinth of tables without the slightest inconvenience to their occupiers. “Beg pardon, Mr Morley,” he said, sliding again into his chair; “but saw one of the American gentlemen brandishing his bowie-knife against one of my waiters; called him Colonel; quieted him directly; a man of his rank brawling with a help; oh! no; not to be thought of; no squabbling here; licence in danger.”

“You were saying—” resumed Morley.

“Ah! yes, about that man Hatton; remember him perfectly well; a matter of twenty or it may be nineteen years since he bolted. Queer fellow; lived upon nothing; only drank water; no temperance and teetotal then, so no excuse. Beg pardon, Mr Morley; no offence I hope; can’t bear whims; but respectable societies, if they don’t drink, they make speeches, hire your rooms, leads to business.”

“And this Hatton—” said Gerard.

“Ah! a queer fellow; lent him a one-pound note—never saw it again—always remember it—last one-pound note I had. He offered me an old book instead; not in my way; took a china jar for my wife. He kept a curiosity shop; always prowling about the country, picking up old books and hunting after old monuments; called himself an antiquarian; queer fellow, that Hatton.”

“And you have heard of him since?” said Gerard rather impatiently.

“Not a word,” said their host; “never knew any one who had.”

“I thought you had something to tell us about him,” said Stephen.

“So I have; I can put you in the way of getting hold of him and anything else. I haven’t lived in Mowbray man and boy for fifty years; seen it a village, and now a great town full of first-rate institutions and establishments like this,” added their host surveying the Temple with a glance of admiring complacency; “I say I haven’t lived here all this time and talked to the people for nothing.”

“Well, we are all attention,” said Gerard with a smile.

“Hush!” said their host as a bell sounded, and he jumped up. “Now ladies, now gentlemen, if you please; silence if you please for a song from a Polish lady. The Signora sings English like a new-born babe;” and the curtain drew up amid the hushed voices of the company and the restrained clatter of their knives and forks and glasses.

The Polish lady sang “Cherry Ripe” to the infinite satisfaction of her audience. Young Mowbray indeed, in the shape of Dandy Mick and some of his followers and admirers, insisted on an encore. The lady as she retired curtsied like a Prima Donna; but the host continued on his legs for some time, throwing open his coat and bowing to his guests, who expressed by their applause how much they approved his enterprise. At length he resumed his seat; “It’s almost too much,” he exclaimed; “the enthusiasm of these people. I believe they look upon me as a father.”

“And you think you have some clue to this Hatton?” resumed Stephen.

“They say he has no relations,” said their host.

“I have heard as much.”

“Another glass of the bar mixture, Master Gerard. What did we call it? Oh! the bricks and beans—the Mowbray bricks and beans; known by that name in the time of my grandfather. No more! No use asking Mr Morley I know. Water! well, I must say—and yet, in an official capacity, drinking water is not so unnatural.”

“And Hatton.” said Gerard; “they say he has no relations, eh?”

“They do, and they say wrong. He has a relation; he has a brother; and I can put you in the way of finding him.”

“Well, that looks like business,” said Gerard; “and where may he be?”

“Not here,” said their host; “he never put his foot in the Temple to my knowledge; and lives in a place where they have as much idea of popular institutions as any Turks or heathen you ever heard of.”

“And where might we find him?” said Stephen.

“What’s that?” said their host jumping up and looking around him. “Here boys, brush about. The American gentleman is a whittling his name on that new mahogany table. Take him the printed list of rules, stuck up in a public place, under a great coat, and fine him five shillings for damaging the furniture. If he resists (he has paid for his liquor), call in the police; X. Z. No. 5 is in the bar, taking tea with your mistress. Now brush.”

“And this place is—”

“In the land of mines and minerals,” said their host; “about ten miles from —. He works in metals on his own account. You have heard of a place called Hell-house Yard; well, he lives there; and his name is Simon.”

“And does he keep up any communication with his brother, think you?” said Gerard.

“Nay, I know no more; at least at present,” said their host. “The secretary asked me about a person absent without leave for twenty years and who was said to have no relations, I found you one and a very near one. You are at the station and you have got your ticket. The American gentleman’s violent. Here’s the police. I must take a high tone.” And with these words Chaffing Jack quitted them.

In the meantime, we must not forget Dandy Mick and his two young friends whom he had so generously offered to treat to the Temple.

“Well, what do you think of it?” asked Caroline of Harriet in a whisper as they entered the splendid apartment.

“It’s just what I thought the Queen lived in,” said Harriet; “but indeed I’m all of a flutter.”

“Well, don’t look as if you were,” said her friend.

“Come along gals,” said Mick; “who’s afraid? Here, we’ll sit down at this table. Now, what shall we have? Here waiter; I say waiter!”

“Yes, sir, yes, sir.”

“Well, why don’t you come when I call,” said Mick with a consequential air. “I have been hallooing these ten minutes. Couple of glasses of bar mixture for these ladies and go of gin for myself. And I say waiter, stop, stop, don’t be in such a deuced hurry; do you think folks can drink without eating;—sausages for three; and damme, take care they are not burnt.”

“Yes, sir, directly, directly.”

“That’s the way to talk to these fellows,” said Mick with a self-satisfied air, and perfectly repaid by the admiring gaze of his companions.

“It’s pretty Miss Harriet,” said Mick looking up at the ceiling with a careless *nil admirari* glance.

“Oh! it is beautiful,” said Harriet.

“You never were here before; it’s the only place. That’s the Lady of the Lake,” he added, pointing to a picture; “I’ve seen her at the Circus, with real water.”

The hissing sausages crowning a pile of mashed potatoes were placed before them; the delicate rummers of the Mowbray slap-bang, for the girls; the more masculine pewter measure for their friend.

“Are the plates very hot?” said Mick;

“Very sir.”

“Hot plates half the battle,” said Mick.

“Now, Caroline; here, Miss Harriet; don’t take away your plate, wait for the mash; they mash their taters here very elegant.”

It was a very happy and very merry party. Mick delighted to help his guests, and to drink their healths.

“Well,” said he when the waiter had cleared away their plates, and left them to their less substantial luxuries. “Well,” said Mick, sipping a renewed glass of gin twist and leaning back in his chair, “say what they please, there’s nothing like life.”

“At the Traffords’,” said Caroline, “the greatest fun we ever had was a singing class.”

“I pity them poor devils in the country,” said Mick; “we got some of them at Collinson’s—come from Suffolk they say; what they call hagricultural labourers, a very queer lot, indeed.”

“Ah! them’s the himmigrants,” said Caroline; “they’re sold out of slavery, and sent down by Pickford’s van into the labour market to bring down our wages.”

“We’ll teach them a trick or two before they do that,” urged Mick. “Where are you, Miss Harriet?”

“I’m at Wiggins and Webster’s, sir.”

“Where they clean machinery during meal-time; that won’t do,” said Mick. “I see one of your partners coming in,” said Mick, making many signals to a person who very soon joined them. “Well, Devilsdust, how are you?”

This was the familiar appellation of a young gentleman, who really had no other, baptismal or patrimonial. About a fortnight after his mother had introduced him into the world, she returned to her factory and put her infant out to nurse, that is to say, paid threepence a week to an old woman who takes charge of these new-born babes for the day, and gives them back at night to their mothers as they hurriedly return from the scene of their labour to the dungeon or the den, which is still by courtesy called “home.” The expense is not great: laudanum and treacle, administered in the shape of some popular elixir, affords these innocents a brief taste of the sweets of existence, and keeping them quiet, prepares them for the silence of their impending grave. Infanticide is practised as extensively and as legally in England, as it is on the banks of the Ganges; a circumstance which apparently has not yet engaged the attention of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. But the vital principle is an impulse from an immortal artist, and sometimes baffles, even in its tenderest phasis, the machinations of society for its extinction. There are infants that will defy even starvation and poison, unnatural mothers and demon nurses. Such was the nameless one of whom we speak. We cannot say he thrived; but he would not die. So at two years of age, his mother being lost sight of, and the weekly payment having ceased, he was sent out in the street to “play,” in order to be run over. Even this expedient failed. The youngest and the feeblest of the band of victims, Juggernaut spared him to Moloch. All his companions were disposed of. Three months’ “play” in the streets got rid of this tender company,—shoeless, half-naked, and uncombed,—whose age varied from two to five years. Some were crushed, some were lost, some caught cold and fevers, crept back to their garret or their cellars, were dosed with Godfrey’s cordial, and died in peace. The nameless one would not

disappear. He always got out of the way of the carts and horses, and never lost his own. They gave him no food: he foraged for himself, and shared with the dogs the garbage of the streets. But still he lived; stunted and pale, he defied even the fatal fever which was the only habitant of his cellar that never quitted it. And slumbering at night on a bed of mouldering straw, his only protection against the plashy surface of his den, with a dungheap at his head and a cesspool at his feet, he still clung to the only roof which shielded him from the tempest.

At length when the nameless one had completed his fifth year, the pest which never quitted the nest of cellars of which he was a citizen, raged in the quarter with such intensity, that the extinction of its swarming population was menaced. The haunt of this child was peculiarly visited. All the children gradually sickened except himself; and one night when he returned home he found the old woman herself dead, and surrounded only by corpses. The child before this had slept on the same bed of straw with a corpse, but then there were also breathing beings for his companions. A night passed only with corpses seemed to him in itself a kind of death. He stole out of the cellar, quitted the quarter of pestilence, and after much wandering laid down near the door of a factory. Fortune had guided him. Soon after break of day, he was woke by the sound of the factory bell, and found assembled a crowd of men, women, and children. The door opened, they entered, the child accompanied them. The roll was called; his unauthorized appearance noticed; he was questioned; his acuteness excited attention. A child was wanted in the Wadding Hole, a place for the manufacture of waste and damaged cotton, the refuse of the mills, which is here worked up into counterpanes and coverlids. The nameless one was preferred to the vacant post, received even a salary, more than that, a name; for as he had none, he was christened on the spot—DEVILSDUST.

Devilsdust had entered life so early that at seventeen he combined the experience of manhood with the divine energy of youth. He was a first-rate workman and received high wages; he had availed himself of the advantages of the factory school; he soon learnt to read and write with facility, and at the moment of our history, was the leading spirit of the Shoddy-Court Literary and Scientific Institute. His great friend, his only intimate, was Dandy Mick. The apparent contrariety of their qualities and structure perhaps led to this. It is indeed the most assured basis of friendship. Devilsdust was dark and melancholy; ambitious and discontented; full of thought, and with powers of patience and perseverance that alone amounted to genius. Mick was as brilliant as his complexion; gay, irritable, evanescent, and unstable. Mick enjoyed life; his friend only endured it; yet Mick was always complaining of the lowness of his wages and the greatness of his toil; while Devilsdust never murmured, but read and pondered on the rights of labour, and sighed to vindicate his order.

“I have some thoughts of joining the Total Abstinence,” said Devilsdust; “ever since I read Stephen Morley’s address it has been in my mind. We shall never get our rights till we leave off consuming exciseable articles; and the best thing to begin with is liquors.”

“Well, I could do without liquors myself,” said Caroline. “If I was a lady, I would never drink anything except fresh milk from the cow.”

“Tea for my money,” said Harriet; “I must say there’s nothing I grudge for good tea. Now I keep house, I mean always to drink the best.”

“Well, you have not yet taken the pledge, Dusty,” said Mick: “and so suppose we order a go of gin and talk this matter of temperance over.”

Devilsdust was manageable in little things, especially by Mick; he acceded, and seated himself at their table.

“I suppose you have heard this last dodge of Shuffle and Screw, Dusty,” said Mick.

“What’s that?”

“Every man had his key given him this evening—half-a-crown a week round deducted from wages for rent. Jim Plastow told them he lodged with his father and didn’t want a house; upon which they said he must let it.”

“Their day will come,” said Devilsdust, thoughtfully. “I really think that those Shuffle and Screws are worse even than Truck and Trett. You knew where you were with those fellows; it was five-and-twenty per cent, off wages and very bad stuff for your money. But as for Shuffle and Screw, what with their fines and their keys, a man never knows what he has to spend. Come,” he added filling his glass, “let’s have a toast—Confusion to Capital.”

“That’s your sort,” said Mick. “Come, Caroline; drink to your partner’s toast, Miss Harriet. Money’s the root of all evil, which nobody can deny. We’ll have the rights of labour yet; the ten-hour bill, no fines, and no individuals admitted to any work who have not completed their sixteenth year.”

“No, fifteen,” said Caroline eagerly.

“The people won’t bear their grievances much longer,” said Devilsdust.

“I think one of the greatest grievances the people have,” said Caroline, “is the beaks serving notice on Chaffing Jack to shut up the Temple on Sunday nights.”

“It is infamous,” said Mick; “aynt we to have no recreation? One might as well live in Suffolk, where the immigrants come from, and where they are obliged to burn ricks to pass the time.”

“As for the rights of labour,” said Harriet, “the people goes for nothing with this machinery.”

“And you have opened your mouth to say a very sensible thing Miss Harriet,” said Mick; “but if I were Lord Paramount for eight-and-forty hours, I’d soon settle that question. Wouldn’t I fire a broadside into their ‘double deckers?’ The battle of Navarino at Mowbray fair with fourteen squibs from the admiral’s ship going off at the same time, should be nothing to it.”

“Labour may be weak, but Capital is weaker,” said Devilsdust. “Their capital is all paper.”

“I tell you what,” said Mick, with a knowing look, and in a lowered tone, “The only thing, my hearties, that can save this here nation, is—a—good strike.”

Book 2 Chapter 11

“Your lordship’s dinner is served,” announced the groom of the chambers to Lord de Mowbray; and the noble lord led out Lady Marney. The rest followed. Egremont found himself seated next to Lady Maud Fitz-Warene, the younger daughter of the earl. Nearly opposite to him was Lady Joan.

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.