

Weyman Stanley John

Chippinge Borough



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I

THE DISSOLUTION

Boom!

It was April 22, 1831, and a young man was walking down Whitehall in the direction of Parliament Street. He wore shepherd's plaid trousers and the swallow-tail coat of the day, with a figured muslin cravat wound about his wide-spread collar. He halted opposite the Privy Gardens, and, with his face turned skywards, listened until the sound of the Tower guns smote again on the ear and dispelled his doubts. To the experienced, his outward man, neat and modestly prosperous, denoted a young barrister of promise or a Treasury clerk. His figure was good, he was above the middle height, and he carried himself with an easy independence. He seemed to be one who both held a fair opinion of himself and knew how to impress that opinion on his fellows; yet was not incapable of deference where deference was plainly due. He was neither ugly nor handsome, neither slovenly nor a *petit-maître*; indeed, it was doubtful if he had ever seen the inside of Almack's. But his features were strong and intellectual, and the keen grey eyes which looked so boldly on the world could express both humour and good humour. In a word, this young man was one upon whom women, even great ladies, were likely to look with pleasure, and one woman-but he had not yet met her-with tenderness.

Boom!

He was only one among a dozen, who within the space of a few yards had been brought to a stand by the sound; who knew what the salute meant, and in their various ways were moved by it. The rumour which had flown through the town in the morning that the King was about to dissolve his six-months-old Parliament was true, then! so true that already in the clubs, from Boodle's to Brooks's, men were sending off despatches, while the long arms of the semaphore were carrying the news to the Continent. Persons began to run by Vaughan-the young man's name was Arthur Vaughan; and behind him the street was filling with a multitude hastening to see the sight, or so much of it as the vulgar might see. Some ran towards Westminster without disguise. Some, of a higher station, walked as fast as dignity and their strapped trousers permitted; while others again, who thought themselves wiser than their neighbours, made quickly for Downing Street and the different openings which led into St. James's Park, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the procession before the crowd about the Houses engulfed it.

Nine out of ten, as they ran or walked-nay, it might be said more truly, ninety-nine out of a hundred-evinced a joy quite out of the common, and such as no political event of these days produces. One cried, "Hip! Hip! Hip!"; one flung up his cap; one swore gaily. Strangers told one another that it was a good thing, bravely done! And while the whole of that part of the town seemed to be moving towards the Houses, the guns boomed on, proclaiming to all the world that the unexpected had happened; that the Parliament which had passed the People's Bill by one-a miserable one in the largest House which had ever voted-and having done that, had shelved it by some shift, some subterfuge, was meeting the fate which it deserved.

No man, be it noted, called the measure the Reform Bill, or anything but the Bill, or, affectionately, the People's Bill. But they called it that repeatedly, and in their enthusiasm, exulted in the fall of its enemies as in a personal gain. And though here and there amid the general turmoil a man of mature age stood aside and scowled on the crowd as it swept vociferating by him, such

men were but as straws in a backwater of the stream-powerless to arrest the current, and liable at any moment to be swept within its influence.

That generation had seen many a coach start laurel-clad from St. Martin's and listened many a time to the salvoes that told of victories in France or Flanders. But it was no exaggeration to say that even Waterloo had not flung abroad more general joy, nor sown the dingy streets with brighter faces, than this civil gain. For now-now, surely-the People's Bill would pass, and the people be truly represented in Parliament! Now, for certain, the Bill's ill-wishers would get a fall! And if every man-about which some doubts were whispered even in the public-houses-did not get a vote which he could sell for a handful of gold, as his betters had sold their votes time out of mind, at least there would be beef and beer for all! Or, if not that, something indefinite, but vastly pleasant. Few, indeed, knew precisely what they wished and what they were going to gain, but

Hurrah for Mr. Brougham!
Hurrah for Gaffer Grey!
Hurrah for Lord John!

Hurrah, in a word, for the Ministry, hurrah for the Whigs! And above all, three cheers for the King, who had stood by Lord Grey and dissolved this niggling, hypocritical Parliament of landowners.

Meanwhile the young man who has been described resumed his course; but slowly, and without betraying by any marked sign that he shared the general feeling. Still, he walked with his head a little higher than before; he seemed to sniff the battle; and there was a light in his eyes as if he saw a wider arena before him. "It is true, then," he muttered. "And for to-day I shall have my errand for my pains. He will have other fish to fry, and will not see me. But what of that! Another day will do as well."

At this moment a ragamuffin in an old jockey-cap attached himself to him, and, running beside him, urged him to hasten.

"Run, your honour," he croaked in gin-laden accents, "and you'll 'ave a good place! And I'll drink your honour's health, and Billy the King's! Sure he's the father of his country, and seven besides. Come on, your honour, or they'll be jostling you!"

Vaughan glanced down and shook his head. He waved the man away.

But the lout looked only to his market, and was not easily repulsed. "He's there, I tell you," he persisted. "And for threepence I'll get you to see him. Come on, your honour! It's many a Westminster election I've seen, and beer running, from Mr. Fox, that was the gentleman had always a word for the poor man, till now, when maybe it's your honour's going to stand! Anyway, it's, Down with the mongers!"

A man who was clinging to the wall at the corner of Downing Street waved his broken hat round his head. "Ay, down with the borough-mongers!" he cried. "Down with Peel! Down with the Dook! Down with 'em all! Down with everybody!"

"And long live the Bill!" cried a man of more respectable appearance as he hurried by. "And long live the King, God bless him!"

"They'll know what it is to balk the people now," chimed in a fourth. "Let 'em go back and get elected if they can. Ay, let 'em!"

"Ay, let 'em! Mr. Brougham'll see to that!" shouted the other. "Hurrah for Mr. Brougham!"

The cry was taken up by the crowd, and three cheers were given for the Chancellor, who was so well known to the mob by the style under which he had been triumphantly elected for Yorkshire that his peerage was ignored.

Vaughan, however, heard but the echo of these cheers. Like most young men of his time, he leant to the popular side. But he had no taste for the populace in the mass; and the sight of the crowd, which was fast occupying the whole of the space before Palace Yard and even surging back

into Parliament Street, determined him to turn aside. He shook off his attendant and, crossing into Whitehall Place, walked up and down, immersed in his reflections.

He was honestly ambitious, and his thoughts turned naturally on the influence which this Bill-which must create a new England, and for many a new world-was likely to have on his own fortunes. The owner of a small estate in South Wales, come early to his inheritance, he had sickened of the idle life of an officer in peacetime; and after three years of service, believing himself fit for something higher, he had sold his commission and turned his mind to intellectual pursuits. He hoped that he had a bent that way; and the glory of the immortal three, who thirty years before had founded the "Edinburgh Review," and, by so doing, made this day possible, attracted him. Why should not he, as well as another, be the man who, in the Commons, the cockpit of the nation, stood spurred to meet all comers-in an uproar which could almost be heard where he walked? Or the man who, in the lists of Themis, upheld the right of the widow and the poor man's cause, and to whom judges listened with reluctant admiration? Or best of all, highest of all, might he not vie with that abnormal and remarkable man who wore at once the three crowns, and whether as Edinburgh Reviewer, as knight of the shire for York, or as Chancellor of England, played his part with equal ease? To be brief, it was prizes such as these, distant but luminous, that held his eyes, incited him to effort, made him live laborious days. He believed that he had ability, and though he came late to the strife, he brought his experience. If men living from hand to mouth and distracted by household cares could achieve so much, why should not he who had his independence and his place in the world? Had not Erskine been such another? He, too, had sickened of barrack life. And Brougham and the two Scotts, Eldon and Stowell. To say nothing of this young Macaulay, whose name was beginning to run through every mouth; and of a dozen others who had risen to fame from a lower and less advantageous station.

The goal was distant, but it was glorious. Nor had the eighteen months which he had given to the study of the law, to attendance at the Academic and at a less ambitious debating society, and to the output of some scientific feelers, shaken his faith in himself. He had not yet thought of a seat at St. Stephen's; for no nomination had fallen to him, nor, save from one quarter, was likely to fall. And his income, some six hundred a year, though it was ample for a bachelor, would not stretch to the price of a seat at five thousand for the Parliament, or fifteen hundred for the Session-the quotations which had ruled of late. A seat some time, however, he must have; it was a necessary stepping-stone to the heights he would gain. And the subject in his mind as he paced Whitehall Place was the abolition of the close boroughs and the effect which the transfer of electoral power to the middle-class would have on his chances.

A small thing-no more than a quantity of straw laid thickly before one of the houses-brought his thoughts down to the present. By a natural impulse he raised his eyes to the house; by a coincidence, less natural, a hand, even as he looked, showed itself behind one of the panes of a window on the first floor, and drew down the blind. Vaughan stood after that, fascinated, and watched the lowering of blind after blind. And the solemn contrast between his busy thoughts and that which had even then happened in the house-between that which lay behind the darkened windows and the bright April sunshine about him, the twittering of the sparrows in the green, and the tumult of distant cheering-went home to him.

He thought of the lines, so old and so applicable:

Omnes eodem cogimur, omnium
Versatur urna, serius, ocius,
Sors exitura, et nos in æternum
Exilium impositura cymbæ.

He was still rolling the words on his tongue with that love of the classical rhythm which was a mark of his day-and returns no more than the taste for the prize-ring which was coeval with it-when

the door of the house opened and a man came clumsily and heavily out, closed the door behind him, and, with his head bent low and the ungainly movements of an automaton, made off down the street.

The man was very stout as well as tall, his dress slovenly and disordered. His hat was pulled awry over his eyes, and his hands were plunged deep in his breeches pockets. Vaughan saw so much. Then the door opened again, and a face, unmistakably that of a butler, looked out.

The servant's eyes met his, and though the man neither spoke nor beckoned, his eyes spoke for him. Vaughan crossed the way to him. "What is it?" he asked.

The man was blubbering. "Oh, Lord; oh, Lord!" he said. "My lady's gone not five minutes, and he'll not be let nor hindered! He's to the House, and if the crowd set upon him he'll be murdered. For God's sake, follow him, sir! He's Sir Charles Wetherell, and a better master never walked, let them say what they like. If there's anybody with him, maybe they'll not touch him."

"I will follow him," Vaughan answered. And he hastened after the stout man, who had by this time reached the corner of the street.

Vaughan was surprised that he had not recognised Wetherell. For in every bookseller's window caricatures of the "Last of the Boroughbridges," as the wits called him, after the pocket borough for which he sat, were plentiful as blackberries. Not only was he the highest of Tories, but he was a martyr in their cause; for, Attorney-General in the last Government, he had been dismissed for resisting the Catholic Claims. Since then he had proved himself, of all the opponents of the Bill, the most violent, the most witty, and, with the exception of Croker perhaps, the most rancorous. At this date he passed for the best hated man in England; and representative to the public mind of all that was old-fashioned and illiberal and exclusive. Vaughan knew, therefore, that the servant's fears were not unfounded, and with a heart full of pity-for he remembered the darkened house-he made after him.

By this time Sir Charles was some way ahead and already involved in the crowd. Fortunately the throng was densest opposite Old Palace Yard, whence the King was in the act of departing; and the space before the Hall and before St. Stephen's Court-the buildings about which abutted on the river-though occupied by a loosely moving multitude, and presenting a scene of the utmost animation, was not impassable. Sir Charles was in the heart of the crowd before he was recognised; and then his stolid unconsciousness and the general good-humour, born of victory, served him well. He was too familiar a figure to pass altogether unknown; and here and there a man hissed him. One group turned and hooted after him. But he was within a dozen yards of the entrance of St. Stephen's Court, with Vaughan on his heels, before any violence was offered. There a man whom he happened to jostle recognised him and, bawling abuse, pushed him rudely; and the act might well have been the beginning of worse things. But Vaughan touched the man on the shoulder and looked him in the face. "I shall know you," he said quietly. "Have a care!" And the fellow, intimidated by his words and his six feet of height, shrank into himself and stood back.

Wetherell had barely noticed the rudeness. But he noted the intervention by a backward glance. "Much obliged," he grunted. "Know you, too, again, young gentleman." And he went heavily on and passed out of the crowd into the court, followed by a few scattered hisses.

Behind the officers of the House who guarded the entrance a group of excited talkers were gathered. They were chiefly members who had just left the House and had been brought to a stand by the sight of the crowd. On seeing Wetherell, surprise altered their looks. "Good G-d!" cried one, stepping forward. "You've come down, Wetherell?"

"Ay," the stricken man answered without lifting his eyes or giving the least sign of animation. "Is it too late?"

"By an hour. There's nothing to be done. Grey and Bruffam have got the King body and soul. He was so determined to dissolve, he swore that he'd come down in a hackney-coach rather than not come. So they say!"

"Ay!"

"But I hope," a second struck in, in a tone of solicitude, "that as you are here, Lady Wetherell has rallied."

"She died a quarter of an hour ago," he muttered. "I could do no more. I came here. But as I am too late, I'll go back."

Yet he stood awhile, as if he had no longer anything to draw him one way more than another; with his double chin and pendulous cheeks resting on his breast and his leaden eyes sunk to the level of the pavement. And the others stood round him with shocked faces, from which his words and manner had driven the flush of the combat. Presently two members, arguing loudly, came up, and were silenced by a glance and a muttered word. The ungainly attitude, the ill-fitting clothes, did but accentuate the tragedy of the central figure. They knew-none better-how fiercely, how keenly, how doggedly he had struggled against death, against the Bill.

And yet, had they thought of it, the vulgar caricatures that had hurt her, the abuse that had passed him by to lodge in her bosom, would hurt her no more!

Meanwhile, Vaughan, as soon as he had seen Sir Charles within the entrance reserved for members, had betaken himself to the main door of the Hall, a few paces to the westward. He had no hope that he would now be able to perform the errand on which he had set forth; for the Chancellor, for certain, would have other fish to fry and other people to see. But he thought that he would leave a card with the usher, so that Lord Brougham might know that he had not failed to come, and might make a fresh appointment if he still wished to see him.

Of the vast congeries of buildings which then encased St. Stephen's Chapel and its beautiful but degraded cloisters, little more than the Hall is left to us. The Hall we have, and in the main in the condition in which the men of that generation viewed it; as Canning viewed it, when with death in his face he paced its length on Peel's arm, and suspecting, perhaps, that they two would meet no more, proved to all men the good-will he bore his rival. Those among us whose memories go back a quarter of a century, and who can recall its aspect in term-time, with three score barristers parading its length, and thrice as many suitors and attorneys darting over its pavement-all under the lofty roof which has no rival in Europe-will be able to picture it as Vaughan saw it when he entered. To the bustle attending the courts of law was added on this occasion the supreme excitement of the day. In every corner, on the steps of every court, eager groups wrangled and debated; while above the hubbub of argument and the trampling of feet, the voices of ushers rose monotonously, calling a witness or enjoining order.

Vaughan paused beside the cake-stall at the door and surveyed the scene. As he stood, one of two men who were pacing near saw him, and with a whispered word left his companion and came towards him.

"Mr. Vaughan," he said, extending his hand with bland courtesy, "I hope you are well. Can I do anything for you? We are dissolved, but a frank is a frank for all that-to-day."

"No, I thank you," Vaughan answered. "The truth is, I had an appointment with the Chancellor for this afternoon. But I suppose he will not see me now."

The other's eyebrows met, with the result that his face looked less bland. He was a small man, with keen dark eyes and bushy grey whiskers, and an air of hawk-like energy which sixty years had not tamed. He wore the laced coat of a sergeant at law, powdered on the shoulders, as if he had but lately and hurriedly cast off his wig. "Good G-d!" he said. "With the Chancellor!" And then, pulling himself up, "But I congratulate you. A student at the Bar, as I believe you are, Mr. Vaughan, who has appointments with the Chancellor, has fortune indeed within his grasp."

Vaughan laughed. "I fear not," he said. "There are appointments and appointments, Sergeant Wathen. Mine is not of a professional nature."

Still the sergeant's face, do what he would, looked grim. He had his reasons for disliking what he heard. "Indeed!" he said drily. "Indeed! But I must not detain you. Your time," with a faint note of sarcasm, "is valuable." And with a civil salutation the two parted.

Wathen went back to his companion. "Talk of the Old One!" he said. "Do you know who that is?"

"No," the other answered. They had been discussing the coming election. "Who is it?"

"One of my constituents."

His friend laughed. "Oh, come," he said. "I thought you had but one, sergeant-old Vermuyden."

"Only one," Wathen answered, his eyes travelling from group to group, "who counts; or rather, who did count. But thirteen who poll. And that's one of them." He glanced frowning in the direction which Vaughan had taken. "And what do you think his business is here, confound him?"

"What?"

"An appointment with old Wicked Shifts."

"With the Chancellor? Pheugh!"

"Ay," the sergeant answered morosely, "you may whistle. There's some black business on foot, you may depend upon it. And ten to one it's about my seat. He's a broom," he continued, tugging at the whiskers which the late King had stamped with the imprimatur of fashion, "that will make a clean sweep of us if we don't take care. Whatever he does, there's something behind it. Some bedchamber plot, or some intrigue to get A. out and put B. in. If it was a charwoman's place he wanted, he'd not ask for it and get it. That wouldn't please him. But he'd tunnel and tunnel and tunnel-and so he'd get it."

"Still," the other replied, with secret amusement-for he had no seat, and the woes of our friends, especially our better-placed friends, have their comic side-"I thought that you had a safe thing, Wathen? That old Vermuyden's nomination at Chippinge was as good as an order on the Bank of England?"

"It was," Wathen answered drily. "But with the country wild for the Bill, there's no saying what may happen anywhere. Safe!" he continued, with a snarl. "Was there ever a safer seat than Westbury? Or a man who had a place in better order than old Lopes, who owned it, and died last month; taken from the evil to come, Jekyll said, for he never could have existed in a world without rotten boroughs! It's not far from Chippinge, so I know-know it well. And I tell you his system was beautiful-beautiful! Yet when Peel was there-after he had rattled on the Catholic Claims and been thrown out at Oxford, Lopes made way for him, you remember? – he would not have got in, no, by G-d, he wouldn't have got in if there had been a man against him. And the state in which the country was then, though there was a bit of a Protestant cry, too, wasn't to compare with what it will be now. That man" – he shook his fist stealthily in the direction of the Chancellor's Court-"has lighted a fire in England that will never be put out till it has consumed King, Lords, and Commons-ay, every stick and stone of the old Constitution. You take my word for it. And to think-to think," he added still more savagely, "that it is the Whigs have done this. The Whigs! who own more than half the land in the country; who are prouder and stiffer than old George the Third himself; who wouldn't let you nor me into their Cabinet to save our lives. By the Lord," he concluded with gusto, "they'll soon learn the difference!"

"In the meantime-there'll be dead cats and bad eggs flying, you think?"

Wathen groaned. "If that were the end of it," he said, "I'd not mind."

"Still, with it all, you are pretty safe, I suppose?"

"With that fellow closeted with the Chancellor? No, no!"

"Who is the young spark!" the other asked carelessly. "He looked a decentish kind of fellow. A little of the prig, perhaps."

"He's that!" Wathen answered. "A d-d prig. What's more, a cousin of old Vermuyden's. And what's worse, his heir. That's why they put him in the corporation and made him one of the thirteen. Thought the vote safe in the family, you see? And cheaper?" He winked. "But there's no love lost between him and old Sir Robert. A bed for a night once a year, and one day in the season among the turnips, and glad to see your back, my lad! That's about the position. Now I wonder if Brougham is going to try-but Lord! there's no guessing what is in that man's head! He's fuller of mischief than an egg of meat!"

The other was about to answer when one of the courts, in which a case of some difficulty had caused a late sitting, discharged its noisy, wrangling, perspiring crowd. The two stepped aside to avoid the evasion, and did not résumé their talk. Wathen's friend made his way out by the main door near which they had been standing; while the sergeant, with looks which mirrored the gloom that a hundred Tory faces wore on that day, betook himself to the robing-room. There he happened upon another unfortunate. They fell to talking, and their talk ran naturally upon the Chancellor, upon old Grey's folly in letting himself be led by the nose by such a rogue; finally, upon the mistakes of their own party. They differed on the last topic, and in that natural and customary state we may leave them.

II

THE SPIRIT OF THE STORM

The Court of Chancery, the preserve for nearly a quarter of a century of Eldon and Delay, was the farthest from the entrance on the right-hand side of the Hall—a situation which enabled the Chancellor to pass easily to that other seat of his labours, the Woolsack. Two steps raised the Tribunals of the Common Law above the level of the Hall. But as if to indicate that this court was not the seat of anything so common as law, but was the shrine of that more august conception, Patronage, and the altar to which countless divines of the Church of England looked with unwinking devotion, a flight of six or eight steps led up to the door.

The privacy thus secured had been much to the taste of Lord Eldon. Doubt and delay flourish best in a close and dusty atmosphere; and if ever there was a man to whom that which was right, it was "Old Bags." Nor had Lord Lyndhurst, his immediate successor, quarrelled with an arrangement which left him at liberty to devote his time to society and his beautiful wife. But the man who now sat in the marble chair was of another kind from either of these. His worst enemy could not lay dulness to his charge; nor could he who lectured the Whitbreads on brewing, who explained their art to opticians, who vied with Talleyrand in the knowledge of French literature, who wrote eighty articles for the first twenty numbers of the "Edinburgh Review," be called a sluggard. Confident of his powers, Brougham loved to display them; and the wider the arena the better he was pleased. His first sitting had been graced by the presence of three royal dukes, a whole Cabinet, and a score of peers in full dress. Having begun thus auspiciously, he was not the man to vegetate in the gloom of a dry-as-dust court, or to be content with an audience of suitors, whom equity, blessed word, had long stripped of their votes.

Again and again during the last six months, by brilliant declamations or by astounding statement, he had filled his court to the last inch. The lions in the Tower, the tombs in the Abbey, the New Police—all were deserted; and countryfolk flocked to Westminster, not to hear the judgments of the highest legal authority in the land, but to see with their own eyes the fugleman of reform—the great orator, whose voice, raised at the Yorkshire election, had found an echo that still thundered in the ears and the hearts of England.

"I am for Reform!" he had said in the castle yard of York; and the people of England had answered: "So are we; and we will have it, or—"

The lacuna they had filled, not with words, but with facts stronger than words—with the flames of Kentish farmhouses and Wiltshire factories; with political unions counting their numbers by scores of thousands; with midnight drillings and vague and sullen murmurings; above all, with the mysterious terror of some great change which was to come—a terror that shook the most thoughtless and affected even the Duke, as men called the Duke of Wellington in that day. For was not every crown on the Continent toppling?

Vaughan did not suppose that, in view of the startling event of the day, he would be admitted. But the usher, who occupied a high stool outside the great man's door, no sooner read his card than he slid to the ground. "I think his lordship will see you, sir," he murmured blandly; and he disappeared.

He was back on the instant, and, beckoning to Vaughan to follow him, he proceeded some paces along a murky corridor, which the venerable form of Eldon seemed still to haunt. Opening a door, he stood aside.

The room which Vaughan saw before him was stately and spacious, and furnished with quiet richness. A deep silence, intensified by the fact that the room had no windows, but was lighted from above, reigned in it—and a smell of law-calf. Here and there on a bookcase or a pedestal stood a marble bust of Bacon, of Selden, of Blackstone. And for a moment Vaughan fancied that these were its only

occupants. On advancing further, however, he discovered two persons, who were writing busily at separate side-tables; and one of them looked up and spoke.

"Your pardon, Mr. Vaughan!" he said. "One moment, if you please!"

He was almost as good as his word, for less than a minute later he threw down the pen, and rose—a gaunt figure in a black frockcoat, and with a black stock about his scraggy neck—and came to meet his visitor.

"I fear that I have come at an untimely moment, my lord," Vaughan said, a little awed in spite of himself by what he knew of the man.

But the other's frank address put him at once at his ease. "Politics pass, Mr. Vaughan," the Chancellor answered lightly, "but science remains." He did not explain, as he pointed to a seat, that he loved, above all things, to produce startling effects; to dazzle by the ease with which he flung off one part and assumed another.

Henry Brougham—so, for some time after his elevation to the peerage, he persisted in signing himself—was at this time at the zenith of his life, as of his fame. Tall, but lean and ungainly, with a long neck and sloping shoulders, he had one of the strangest faces which genius has ever worn. His clownish features, his high cheek-bones, and queer bulbous nose are familiar to us; for, something exaggerated by the caricaturist, they form week by week the trailing mask which mars the cover of "Punch." Yet was the face, with all its ugliness, singularly mobile; and the eyes, the windows of that restless and insatiable soul, shone, sparkled, laughed, wept, with incredible brilliance. That which he did not know, that which his mind could not perform—save sit still and be discreet—no man had ever discovered. And it was the knowledge of this, the sense of the strange and almost uncanny versatility of the man, which for a moment overpowered Vaughan.

The Chancellor seated himself opposite his visitor, and placed a hand on each of his wide-spread knees. He smiled.

"My friend," he said, "I envy you."

Vaughan coloured shyly. "Your lordship has little cause," he answered.

"Great cause," was the reply, "great cause! For as you are I was—and," he chuckled, as he rocked himself to and fro, "I have not found life very empty or very unpleasant. But it was not to tell you this that I asked you to wait on me, Mr. Vaughan, as you may suppose. Light! It is a singular thing that you at the outset of your career—even as I thirty years ago at the same point of mine—should take up such a paragon, and alight upon the same discovery."

"I do not think I understand."

"In your article on the possibility of the permanence of reflection—to which I referred in my letter, I think?"

"Yes, my lord, you did."

"You have restated a fact which I maintained for the first time more than thirty years ago! In my paper on colours, read before the Royal Society in—I think it was '96."

Vaughan stared. His colour rose slowly. "Indeed?" he said, in a tone from which he vainly strove to banish incredulity.

"You have perhaps read the paper?"

"Yes, I have."

The Chancellor chuckled. "And found nothing of the kind in it?" he said.

Vaughan coloured still more deeply. He felt that the position was unpleasant. "Frankly, my lord, if you ask me, no."

"And you think yourself," with a grin, "the first discoverer?"

"I did."

Brougham sprang like a boy to his feet, and whisked his long, lank body to a distant bookshelf. Thence he took down a much-rubbed manuscript book. As he returned he opened this at a place

already marked, and, laying it on the table, beckoned to the young man to approach. "Read that," he said waggishly, "and confess, young sir, that there were chiefs before Agamemnon."

Vaughan stooped over the book, and having read looked up in perplexity. "But this passage," he said, "was not in the paper read before the Royal Society in '96?"

"In the paper read? No. Nor yet in the paper printed? There, too, you are right. And why? Because a sapient dunder-head who was in authority requested me to omit this passage. He did not believe that light passing through a small hole in the window-shutter of a darkened room impresses a view of external objects on white paper; nor that, as I suggested, the view might be made permanent if cast instead on ivory rubbed with nitrate of silver!"

Vaughan was dumbfounded, and perhaps a little chagrined. "It is most singular!" he said.

"Do you wonder now that I could not refrain from sending for you?"

"I do not, indeed."

The Chancellor patted him kindly on the shoulder, and by a gesture made him *résumé* his seat. "No, I could not refrain," he continued; "the coincidence was too remarkable. If you come to sit where I sit, the chance will be still more singular."

Vaughan coloured with pleasure. "Alas!" he said, smiling, "one swallow, my lord, does not make a summer."

"Ah, my friend," with a benevolent look. "But I know more of you than you think. You were in the service, I hear, and left it. *Cedant arma togæ*, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, I, too, after a fashion. Thirty years ago I served a gun with Professor Playfair in the Volunteer Artillery of Edinburgh. God knows," he continued complacently, "if I had gone on with it, where I should have landed! Where the Duke is, perhaps! More surprising things have happened."

Vaughan did not know whether to take this, which was gravely and even sentimentally spoken, for jest or earnest. He did not speak. And Brougham, seated in his favourite posture, with a hand on either knee, his lean body upright, and the skirts of his black coat falling to the floor on either side of him, resumed. "I hear, too, that you have done well at the Academic," he said, "and on the right side, Mr. Vaughan. Light? Ay, always light, my friend, always light! Let that be our motto. For myself," he continued earnestly, "I have taken it in hand that this poor country shall never lack light again; and by God's help and Johnny Russell's Bill I'll bring it about! And not the phosphorescent light of rotten boroughs and corrupt corporations, Mr. Vaughan. No, nor the blaze of burning stacks, kindled by wretched, starving, ignorant-ay, above all, Mr. Vaughan, ignorant men! But the light of education, the light of a free Press, the light of good government and honest representation; so that, whatever they lack, henceforth they shall have voices and means and ways to make their wants known. You agree with me? But I know you do, for I hear how well you have spoken on that side. Mr. Cornelius," turning and addressing the gentleman who still continued to write at his table, "who was it told us of Mr. Vaughan's speech at the Academic?"

"I don't know," Mr. Cornelius answered gruffly.

"No?" the Chancellor said, not a whit put out. "He never knows anything!" And then, throwing one knee over the other, he regarded Vaughan with closer attention. "Mr. Vaughan," he said, "have you ever thought of entering Parliament?"

Vaughan's heart bounded, and his face betrayed his emotions. Good heavens, was the Chancellor about to offer him a Government seat? He scarcely knew what to expect or what to say. The prospect, suddenly opened, blinded him. He muttered that he had not as yet thought of it.

"You have no connection," Brougham continued, "who could help you to a seat? For if so, now is the time. Presently there will be a Reformed Parliament and a crowd of new men, and the road will be blocked by the throng of aspirants. You are not too young. Palmerston was not so old when Perceval offered him a seat in the Cabinet."

The words, the tone, the assumption that such things were for him-that he had but to hold out his hand and they would fall into it-dropped like balm into the young man's soul. Yet he was not sure that the other was serious, and he made a tremendous effort to hide the emotion he felt. "I am afraid," he said, with a forced smile, "that I, my lord, am not Lord Palmerston."

"No?" Brougham answered with a faint sneer. "But not much the worse for that, perhaps. So that if you have any connection who commands a seat, now is the time."

Vaughan shook his head. "I have none," he said, "except my cousin, Sir Robert Vermuyden."

"Vermuyden of Chippinge?" the Chancellor exclaimed, in a voice of surprise.

"The same, my lord."

"Good G-d!" Brougham cried. It was not a mealy-mouthed age. And he leant back and stared at the young man. "You don't mean to say that he is your cousin?"

"Yes."

The Chancellor laughed grimly. "Oh, dear, dear!" he said. "I am afraid that he won't help us much. I remember him in the House-an old high and dry Tory. I am afraid that, with your opinions, you've not much to expect of him. Still-Mr. Cornelius," to the gentleman at the table, "oblige me with Oldfield's 'House of Commons,' the Wiltshire volume, and the private Borough List. Thank you. Let me see-ah, here it is!"

He proceeded to read in a low tone, skipping from heading to heading: "Chippinge, in the county of Wilts, has returned two members since the twenty-third of Edward III. Right of election in the Alderman and the twelve capital burgesses, who hold their places for life. Number of voters, thirteen. Patron, Sir Robert Vermuyden, Bart., of Stapylton House.

"Umph, as I thought," he continued, laying down the book. "Now what does the list say?" And, taking it in turn from his knee, he read:

"In Schedule A for total disfranchisement, the population under 2000. Present members, Sergeant Wathen and Mr. Cooke, on nomination of Sir Robert Vermuyden; the former to oblige Lord Eldon, the latter by purchase. Both opponents of Bill; nothing to be hoped from them. The Bowood interest divides the corporation in the proportion of four to nine, but has not succeeded in returning a member since the election of 1741-on petition. The heir to the Vermuyden interest is-" He broke off sharply, but continued to study the page. Presently he looked over it.

"Are you the Mr. Vaughan who inherits?" he asked gravely.

"The greater part of the estates-yes."

Brougham laid down the book and rubbed his chin. "Under those circumstances," he said, after musing a while, "don't you think that your cousin could be persuaded to return you as an independent member?"

Vaughan shook his head with decision.

"The matter is important," the Chancellor continued slowly, and as if he weighed his words. "I cannot precisely make a promise, Mr. Vaughan; but if your cousin could see the question of the Bill in another light, I have little doubt that any object in reason could be secured for him. If, for instance, it should be necessary in passing the Bill through the Upper House to create new-eh?"

He paused, looking at Vaughan, who laughed outright. "Sir Robert would not cross the park to save my life, my lord," he said. "And I am sure he would rather hang outside the White Lion in Chippinge marketplace than resign his opinions or his borough!"

"He'll lose the latter, whether or no," Brougham answered, with a touch of irritation. "Was there not some trouble about his wife? I think I remember something."

"They were separated many years ago."

"She is alive, is she not?"

"Yes."

Brougham saw, perhaps, that the subject was not palatable, and he abandoned it. With an abrupt change of manner he flung the books from him with the recklessness of a boy, and raised his sombre figure to its height. "Well, well," he said, "I hoped for better things; but I fear, as Tommy Moore sings-

"He's pledged himself, though sore bereft
Of ways and means of ruling ill,
To make the most of what are left
And stick to all that's rotten still!

And by the Lord, I don't say that I don't respect him. I respect every man who votes honestly as he thinks." And grandly, with appropriate gestures, he spouted:

"Who spurns the expedient for the right
Scorns money's all-attractive charms,
And through mean crowds that clogged his flight
Has nobly cleared his conquering arms.

That's the Attorney-General's. He turns old Horace well, doesn't he?"

Vaughan coloured. Young and candid, he could not bear the thought of taking credit where he did not deserve it. "I fear," he said awkwardly, "that would bear rather hardly on me if we had a contest at Chippinge, my lord. Fortunately it is unlikely."

"How would it bear hardly on you?" Brougham asked, with interest.

"I have a vote."

"You are one of the twelve burgesses?" in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, by favour of Sir Robert."

The Chancellor, smiling gaily, shook his head. "No," he said, "no; I do not believe you. You do yourself an injustice. Leave that sort of thing to older men, to Lyndhurst, if you will, d-d Jacobin as he is, preening himself in Tory feathers, and determined whoever's in he'll not be out; or to Peel. Leave it! And believe me you'll not repent it. I," he continued loftily, "have seen fifty years of life, Mr. Vaughan, and lived every year of them and every day of them, and I tell you that the thing is too dearly bought at that price."

Vaughan felt himself rebuked; but he made a fight. "And yet," he said, "are there no circumstances, my lord, in which such a vote may be justified?"

"A vote against your conscience-to oblige someone?"

"Well, yes."

"A Jesuit might justify it. There is nothing which a Jesuit could not justify, I suppose. But though no man was stronger for the Catholic Claims than I was, I do not hold a Jesuit to be a man of honour. And that is where the difference lies. There! But," he continued, with an abrupt change from the lofty to the confidential, "let me tell you a fact, Mr. Vaughan. In '29-was it in April or May of '29, Mr. Cornelius?"

"I don't know to what you refer," Mr. Cornelius grunted.

"To be sure you don't," the Chancellor replied, without any loss of good-humour; "but in April or May of '29, Mr. Vaughan, the Duke offered me the Rolls, which is £7000 a year clear for life, and compatible with a seat in the Commons. It would have suited me better in every way than the Seals and the House of Lords. It was the prize, to be frank with you, at which I was aiming; and as at that time the Duke was making his right-about-face on the Catholic question, and was being supported by our side, I might have accepted it with an appearance of honour and consistency. But I did not accept it. I did not, though my refusal injured myself, and did no one any good. But there, I am chattering." He broke off, with a smile, and held out his hand. "However,

"Est et fideli tuta silentio
Merces!"

You won't forget that, I am certain. And you may be sure I shall remember you. I am pleased to have made your acquaintance, Mr. Vaughan. Decide on the direction, politics or the law, in which you mean to push, and some day let me know. In the meantime follow the light! Light, more light! Don't let them lure you back into old Giant Despair's cave, or choke you with all the dead bones and rottenness and foulness they keep there, and that, by God's help, I'll sweep out of the world before it's a year older!"

And still talking, he saw Vaughan, who was murmuring his acknowledgments, to the door.

When that had closed on the young man Brougham came back, and, throwing wide his arms, yawned prodigiously. "Now," he said, "if Lansdowne doesn't effect something in that borough, I am mistaken."

"Why," Cornelius muttered curtly, "do you trouble about the borough? Why don't you leave those things to the managers?"

"Why? Why, first because the Duke did that last year, and you see the result-he's out and we're in. Secondly, Corny, because I am like the elephant's trunk, that can tear down a tree or pick up a pin."

"But in picking up a pin," the other grunted, "it picks up a deal of something else."

"Of what?"

"Dirt!"

"Old Pharisee!" the Chancellor cried.

Mr. Cornelius threw down his pen, and, turning in his seat, opened fire on his companion. "Dirt!" he reiterated sternly. "And for what? What will be the end of it when you have done all for them, clean and dirty? They'll not keep you. They use you now, but you're a new man. What, you-you think to deal on equal terms with the Devonshires and the Hollands, the Lansdownes and the Russells! Who used Burke, and when they had squeezed him tossed him aside? Who used Tierney till they wore him and his fortune out? Who would have used Canning, but he did not trust them, and so they worried him-though they were all dumb dogs before him-to his death. Ay, and presently, when you have served their turn, they will cast you aside."

"They will not dare!" Brougham cried.

"Pshaw! You are Samson, but you are shorn of your strength. They have been too clever for you. While you were in the Commons they did not dare. Harry Brougham was their master. So they lured you, poor fool, into the trap, into the Lords, where you may spout, and spout, and spout, and it will have as much effect as the beating of a bird's wings against the bars of its cage!"

"They will not dare!" Brougham reiterated.

"You will see. They will throw you aside."

Brougham walked up and down the room, his eyes glittering, his quaint, misshapen features working passionately.

"They will throw you aside," Mr. Cornelius repeated, watching him keenly. "You are a man of the people. You are in earnest. You are honestly in favour of retrenchment, of education, of reform. But to these Whigs-save and except to Althorp, who is that *lulus naturæ*, an honest man, and to Johnny Russell, who is a fanatic-these are but catchwords, stalking-horses, the means by which, after the dull old fashion of their fathers and their grandfathers and their great-grandfathers, they think to creep into power. Reform, if reform means the representation of the people by the people, the rule of the people by the people, or by any but the old landed families-why, the very thought would make them sick!"

Brougham stopped in his pacing to and fro. "You are right," he said sombrely.

"You acknowledge it?"

"I have known it-here!" And, drawing himself to his full height, he clapped his hand to his breast. "I have known it here for months. Ay, and though I have sworn to myself that they would not dare to treat me as they treated Burke, and Sheridan, and Tierney, and as they would have treated Canning, I knew it was a lie, my lad; I knew they would. My mother-ay, my old mother, sitting by the chimneyside, out of the world there, knew it, and warned me."

"Then why did you go into the Lords?" Cornelius asked. "Why be lured into the gilded cage, where you are helpless?"

"Because, mark you," Brougham replied sternly, "if I had not, they had not brought in this Bill. And we had waited, and the people had waited, another twenty years, maybe!"

"And so you went into the prison-house shorn of your strength?"

Brougham looked at him with a gleam of ferocity in his brilliant eyes. "Ay," he said, "I did. And by that act," he continued, stretching his long arms to their farthest extent, "mark you, mark you, never forget it, I avenged all-not only all I may suffer at their hands, but all that every slave who ever ground in their mill has suffered, the slights, the grudged meticulous office, the one finger lent to shake-all, all! I went into the prison-house, but when I did so I laid my hands upon the pillars. And their house falls, falls. I hear it-I hear it falling even now about their ears. They may throw me aside. But the house is falling, and the great Whig families-pouf! – they are not in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water that is under the earth. You call Reform their stalking-horse? Ay, but it is into their own Troy that they have dragged it; and the clatter of strife which you hear is the death-knell of their power. They have let in the waves of the sea, and dream fondly that they can say where they shall stop and what they shall not touch. They may as well speak to the tide when it flows; they may as well command the North Sea in its rage; they may as well bid Hume be silent, or Wetherell be sane. You say I am spent, Cornelius; and so I am, it may be. I know not. But this I know. Never again will the families say 'Go!' and he goeth, and 'Do!' and he doeth, as in the old world that is passing-passing even at this minute, passing with the Bill. No," he continued, flinging out his arms with passion; "for when they thought to fool me, and to shut me dumb among dumb things behind the gilded wires, I knew-I knew that I was dragging down their house upon their heads."

Mr. Cornelius stared at him. "By G-d!" he said, "I believe you are right. I believe that you are a cleverer man than I thought you were."

III

TWO LETTERS

The Hall was empty when Vaughan came forth; and as the young man strode down its echoing length there was nothing save his own footsteps on the pavement to distract his mind from the scene in which he had taken part. He was excited and a little uplifted, as was natural. The promises made, if they were to be counted as promises, were of the vague and indefinite character which it is as easy to evade as to fulfil. But the Chancellor had spoken to him as to an equal and treated him as one who had but to choose a career to succeed in it, and to win the highest prizes which it could bestow. This was flattering; nor was it to a young man who had little experience of the world, less flattering to be deemed the owner of a stake in the country, and a person through whom offers of the most confidential and important character might be properly made.

He walked to his rooms in Bury Street with a pleasant warmth at his heart. And at the Academic that evening, where owing to the events of the day there was a fuller house than had ever been known, and a fiercer debate, he championed the Government and upheld the dissolution in a speech which not only excelled his previous efforts, but was a surprise to those who knew him best. Afterwards he recognised that his peroration had been only a paraphrase of Brougham's impassioned "Light! More Light!" and that the whole owed more than he cared to remember to the same source. But, after all, why not? It was not to be expected that he could at once rise to the heights of the greatest of living orators. And it was much that he had made a hit; that as he left the room he was followed by all eyes.

Nor did a qualm worthy of the name trouble him until the morning of the 27th, five days later—a Wednesday. Then he found beside his breakfast plate two letters bearing the postmark of Chippinge.

"What's afoot?" he muttered. But he had a prevision before he broke the seal of the first. And the contents bore out his fears. The letter ran thus:

"Stapylton, Chippinge.

"Dear Sir—I make no apology for troubling you in a matter in which your interest is second only to mine and which is also of a character to make apology beside the mark. It has not been necessary to require your presence at Chippinge upon the occasion of former elections. But the unwholesome ferment into which the public mind has been cast by the monstrous proposals of Ministers has nowhere been more strongly exemplified than here, by the fact that, for the first time in half a century, the right of our family to nominate the members for the Borough is challenged. Since the year 1783 no serious attempt has been made to disturb the Vermuyden interest. And I have yet to learn that—short of this anarchical Bill, which will sweep away all the privileges attaching to property—such an attempt can be made with any chance of success.

"I am informed nevertheless that Lord Lansdowne, presuming on a small connection in the Corporation, intends to send at least one candidate to the poll. Our superiority is so great that I should not, even so, trouble you to be present, were it not an object to discourage these attempts by the exhibition of our full strength, and were it not still more important to do so at a time when the existence of the Borough itself is at stake.

"Isaac White will apprise you of the arrangements to be made and will keep you informed of all matters which you should know. Be good enough to let Mapp learn the day and hour of your arrival, and he will see that the carriage and servants meet the coach at Chippenham. Probably you will come by the York House. It is the most convenient.

*"I have the honour to be
"Your sincere kinsman,
"Robert Vermuyden.*

"To Arthur Vermuyden Vaughan, Esquire,
"17 Bury Street, St. James's."

Vaughan's face grew long, and his fork hung suspended above his plate, as he perused the old gentleman's epistle. When all was read he laid it down, and whistled. "Here's a fix!" he muttered. And he thought of his speech at the Academic; and for the first time he was sorry that he had made it. "Here's a fix!" he repeated. "What's to be done?"

He was too much disturbed to go on with his breakfast, and he tore open the other letter. It was from Isaac White, his cousin's attorney and agent. It ran thus:

*"High Street, Chippinge,
"April 25, 1831.
"Chippinge Parliamentary Election.*

"Sir. – I have the honour to inform you, as upon former occasions, that the writ in the above is expected and that Tuesday the 3rd day of May will be appointed for the nomination. It has not been needful to trouble you heretofore, but on this occasion I have reason to believe that Sir Robert Vermuyden's candidates will be opposed by nominees in the Bowood Interest, and I have therefore, honoured Sir, to intimate that your attendance will oblige.

"The Vermuyden dinner will take place at the White Lion on Monday the 2nd, when the voters and their friends will sit down at 5 P. M. The Alderman will preside, and Sir Robert hopes that you will be present. The procession to the Hustings will leave the White Lion at ten on Tuesday the 3d, and a poll, if demanded, will be taken after the usual proceedings.

"Any change in the order of the arrangements will be punctually communicated to you.

*"I have the honour to be, Sir,
"Your humble obedient servant,
"Isaac White.*

"Arthur V. Vaughan, Esq.,
(late H.M.'s 14th Dragoons),
"17 Bury Street, London."

Vaughan flung the letter down and resumed his breakfast moodily. It was a piece of shocking ill-fortune, that was all there was to be said.

Not that he really regretted his speech! It had committed him a little more deeply, but morally he had been committed before. It is a poor conscience that is not scrupulous in youth; and he was convinced, or almost convinced, that if he had never seen the Chancellor he would still have found it impossible to support Sir Robert's candidates.

For he was sincere in his support of the Bill; a little because it flattered his intellect to show himself above the prejudices of the class to which he belonged; more, because he was of an age to view with resentment the abuses which the Bill promised to sweep away. A Government truly representative of the people, such as this Bill must create, would not tolerate the severities which still disgraced the criminal law. It would not suffer the heartless delays which made the name of Chancery synonymous with ruin. Under it spring-guns and man-traps would no longer scare the owner from his own coverts. The poor would be taught, the slave would be freed. Above all, whole classes of the well-to-do would no longer be deprived of a voice in the State. No longer would the rights of one small class override the rights of all other classes.

He was at an age, in a word, when hope invites to change; and he was for the Bill. "Ay, by Jove, I am!" he muttered, casting the die in fancy, "and I'll not be set down! It will be awkward! It will be odious! But I must go through with it!"

Still, he was sorry. He sprang from the class which had profited by the old system—that system under which some eight-score men returned a majority of the House of Commons. He had himself the prospect of returning two members. He could, therefore enter, to a degree—at times to a greater degree than he liked, — into the feelings with which the old-fashioned and the interested, the prudent and the timid, viewed a change so great and so radical. But his main objection was personal. He hated the necessity which forced him to cross the wishes and to trample on the prejudices of an old man whom he regarded with respect, and even with reverence: a solitary old man, the head of his family, to whom he owed the very vote he must withhold; and who would hardly, even by the logic of facts, be brought to believe that one of his race and breeding could turn against him.

Still it must be done; the die was cast. The sooner, therefore, it was done, the better. He would go down to Stapylton at once, while his courage was high; and he would tell Sir Robert. Then, whatever came of it, he would have nothing with which to reproach himself. In the heat of resolve he felt very brave and very virtuous; and the moment he rose from breakfast he went to the coach office, and finding that the York House, the fashionable Bath, coach was full for the following day, he booked an outside seat on the Bristol White Lion Coach, which also passed through Chippenham. From Chippenham, Chippinge is distant a short nine miles.

That evening proved to be memorable; for the greater part of London was illuminated by the Reformers in honour of the Dissolution; not without rioting and drunkenness, violence on the part of the mob, and rage on the side of the minority. When Vaughan passed through the streets before six next morning, on his way to the White Horse Cellars, traces of the night's work still remained; and where the early sun fell on them showed ugly and grisly and menacing enough. A moderate reformer might well have blenched at the sight, and questioned—as many did question—whither this was tending. But Vaughan was late; the coach, one out of three which were waiting to start, was horsed. He had only eyes, as he came hurriedly up, for the seat he had reserved behind the coachman.

It was empty, and so far his fears were vain. But it annoyed him to find that his next-door neighbour was a young lady travelling alone. She had the seat on the near side.

He climbed up quickly, and to reach his place had to pass before her. The space between the seat and the coachman's box was narrow, and as she rose to allow him to pass she glanced up. Their eyes met; Vaughan raised his hat in mute apology, and took his seat. He said no word. But a miracle had happened, as miracles do happen, when the world is young. In his mind, as he sat down, he was not repeating, "What a nuisance!" but was saying, "What eyes! What a face! And, oh, heaven, what beauty! What blush-rose cheeks! What a lovely mouth!"

For 'twas from eyes of liquid blue
A host of quivered Cupids flew,
And now his heart all bleeding lies
Beneath the army of the eyes.

He gazed gravely at the group of watermen and night-birds who stood in the roadway below waiting to see the coach start. And apparently he was unmoved. Apparently he was the same Arthur Vermuyden Vaughan who had passed round the boot of the coach to reach the ladder and his place. But he was not the same. His thoughts were no longer querulous, full of the haste he had made, and the breakfast he had to make; but of a pair of gentle eyes which had looked for one instant into his, of a modest face, sweet and shy, of a Quaker-like bonnet that ravished as no other bonnet had ever ravished the most susceptible!

He was still gazing at the group of loiterers, without seeing them, when he became aware that an elderly woman plainly but respectably dressed, who was standing by the forewheel of the coach, was looking up at him, and trying to attract his attention. Seeing that she had caught his eye she spoke:

"Gentleman! Gentleman!" she said-but in a restrained voice, as if she did not wish to be generally heard. "The young lady's address! Please say that she's not left it! For the laundress!"

He turned and made sure that there was only one of the sex on the coach. Then-to be honest, not without a tiny flutter at his heart-he addressed his neighbour. "Pardon me," he said "but there is someone below who wants your address."

She turned her eyes on him and his heart gave a perceptible jump. "My address?" she echoed in a voice as sweet as her face. "I think that there must be some mistake." And then for a moment she looked at him as if she doubted his intentions.

The doubt was intolerable. "It's for the laundress," he said. "See, there she is!"

The girl rose to look over the side of the coach and perforce leant across him. He saw that she had the slenderest waist and the prettiest figure-he had every opportunity of seeing. Then the coach started with a jerk, and if she had not steadied herself by laying her hand on his shoulder, she must have relapsed on his knees. As it was she fell back safely into her seat. She blushed.

"I beg your pardon," she said.

But he was looking back. He had his eye on the woman, who remained in the roadway, pointing after the coach and apparently asking a bystander some question respecting it-perhaps where it stopped. "There she is!" he exclaimed. "The woman with the umbrella! She is pointing after us."

His neighbour looked back but made nothing of it. "I know no one in London," she said a little primly-but with sweet primness-"except the lady at whose house I stayed last night. And she is not able to leave the house. It must be a mistake." And with a gentle reserve which had in it nothing of coquetry, she turned her face from him.

Tantivy! Tantivy! Tantivy! They were away, bowling down the slope of broad empty Piccadilly with the four nags trotting merrily, and the April sun gilding the roofs of the houses, and falling aslant on the verdure of the Green Park. Then merrily up the rise to Hyde Park Corner, where the new Grecian Gates looked across at the equally new arch on Constitution Hill; and where Apsley House, the residence of "the Duke," hiding with its new coat of Bath stone the old brick walls, peeped through the trees at the statue of Achilles, erected ten years back in the Duke's honour.

But, alas! what was this? Wherefore the crowd that even at this early hour was large enough to fill the roadway and engage the attention of the New Police? Vaughan looked and saw that every blind in Apsley House was lowered, and that more than half of the windows were shattered. And the little French gentleman who, to the coachman's disgust, had taken the box-seat, saw it too; nay, had seen it before, for he had come that way to the coach office. He pointed to the silent, frowning mansion, and snapped his fingers.

"That is your reward for your Vellington!" he cried, turning in his excitement to the two behind him. "And his lady, I am told, she lie dead behind the broken vindows! They did that last night, your *canaille*! But he vill not forget! And when the refolution come-bah-he vill have the iron hand! He vill be the Emperor and he vill repay!"

No one answered; they treated him with silent British scorn. But they one and all stared back at the scene, at the grim blind house in the early sunshine, and the gaping crowd-as long as it remained in sight. And some, no doubt, pondered the sight. But who, with a pretty face beside him and a long day's drive before him, a drive by mead and shining river, over hill and down, under the walls of grey churches and by many a marketplace and cheery inn-yard-who would long dwell on changes past or to come? Or fret because in the womb of time might lie that "refolution" of which the little Frenchman spoke?

IV

TANTIVY! TANTIVY! TANTIVY!

The White Lion coach was a light coach carrying only five passengers outside, and merrily it swept by Kensington Church, whence the travellers had a peep of Holland House-home of the Whigs-on their right. And then in a twinkling they were swinging through Hammersmith, where the ale-houses were opening and lusty girls were beginning to deliver the milk. They passed through Turnham, through Brentford, awakening everywhere the lazy with the music of their horn. They saw Sion House on their left, and on their right had a glimpse of the distant lawns of Osterley-the seat of Lady Jersey, queen of Almack's, and the Holland's rival. Thence they travelled over Hounslow Heath, and by an endless succession of mansions and lawns and orchards rich at this season with apple blossom, and framing here and there a view of the sparkling Thames.

Vaughan breathed the air of spring and let his eyes dwell on scene after scene; and he felt that it was good to be young and to sit behind fast horses. He stole a glance at his neighbour and judged by the brightness of her eyes, her parted lips and rapt expression, that she felt with him. And he would have said something to her, but he could think of nothing worthy of her. At last:

"It's a beautiful morning," he ventured, and cursed his vapidty.

But she did not seem to find bathos in the words. "It is, indeed!" she answered with an enthusiasm which showed that she had forgotten her doubts of him. "And," she added simply, "I have not been on a coach since I was a child!"

"Not on a coach?" he cried in astonishment.

"No. Except on the Clapham Stage. And that is not a coach like this!"

"No, perhaps it is not," he said. And he thought of her, and-oh, Lord! – of Clapham! And yet after all there was something about her, about her grey, dove-like dress and her gentleness, which smacked of Clapham. He wondered who she was and what she was; and he was still wondering when she turned her eyes on him, and, herself serenely unconscious, sent a tiny shock through him.

"I enjoy it the more," she said, "because I-I am not usually free in the morning."

"Oh, yes!"

He could say no more; not another word. It was the stupidest thing in the world, but he was tongue-tied. Seeing, however, that she had turned from him and was absorbed in the view of Windsor rising stately amid its trees, he had the cleverness to steal a glance at the neat little basket which nestled at her feet. Surreptitiously he read the name on the label.

Mary Smith

Miss Sibson's

Queen's Square, Bristol.

Mary Smith! Just Mary Smith! For the moment-it is not to be denied-he was sobered by the name. It was not a romantic name. It was anything but high-sounding. The author of "Tremayne" or "De Vere," nay, the author of "Vivian Grey" – to complete the trio of novels which were in fashion at the time-would have turned up his nose at it. But what did it matter? He desired no more than to make himself agreeable for the few hours which he and this beautiful creature must pass together-in sunshine and with the fair English landscape gliding by them. And that being so, what need he reckon what she called herself or whence she came. It was enough that under her modest bonnet her ears were shells and her eyes pure cornflowers, and that a few pleasant words, a little April dalliance-if only that Frenchman would cease to peep behind him and grin-would harm neither the one nor the other.

But opportunities let slip do not always recur. As he turned to address her they rose the ascent of Maidenhead Bridge, had on either hand a glimpse of the river framed in pale green willows, and halted with sweating horses before the King's Arms. The boots advanced, amid a group of gazers,

and reared a ladder against the coach. "Half an hour for breakfast, gentlemen!" he cried briskly. And through the windows of the inn the travellers had a view of a long table whereat the passengers on the up night-coach were already feasting.

Our friends hastened to descend, but not so fast that Vaughan failed to note the girl's look of uncertainty, almost of distress. He guessed that she was not at ease in a scene so bustling and so new to her. And the thought gave him the courage that he needed.

"Will you allow me to find you a place at the table?" he said. "I know this inn and they know me. Guard, the ladder here!" And he took her hand-oh, such a little, little hand! – and aided her in her descent.

"Will you follow me?" he said. And he made way for her through the knot of starers who cumbered the doorway. But once in the coffee-room he had, cunning fellow, an inspiration. "Find this lady a seat!" he commanded one of the attendant damsels. And when he had seen her seated and the coffee set before her, he took himself deliberately to the other end of the room. But whether he did so out of pure respect for her feelings, or because he thought-and hugged himself on the thought-that he would be missed, he did not himself know. Nor was he so much a captive, though he counted how many rolls she ate, and looked a dozen times to see if she looked at him, as to be unable to make an excellent breakfast.

The cheery, noisy throng at the tables, the brisk coming and going of the servants, the smell of hot coffee, the open windows, and the sunshine outside-where the fresh team of the up night-coach were already tossing their heads impatiently-he wondered how it all struck her, new to such scenes and to this side of life. And then while he wondered he saw that she had risen from the table and was going out with one of the waiting-maids. To reach the door she had to pass near him; and, oh bliss, her eyes found him-and she blushed. She blushed, ye heavens! He saw it clearly, and he sat thinking about it until, though the coach was not due to start for another five minutes and he might count on the guard summoning him, he was taken with fear lest some one should steal his seat. And he hurried out.

She was alone on the top of the coach, and a youthful waterman, one of the crowd of loiterers below, was making eyes at her to the delight of his companions. When Vaughan came forth, "I'd like to be him," the wag said, winking with vulgar gusto. And the bystanders grinned at the good-looking young man who stood in the doorway buttoning up his box-coat. The position might soon have become embarrassing to her if not to him; but in the nick of time the eye of an inside passenger, who had followed him through the doorway, alighted on a huge placard which hung behind the coach.

"Take that down!" the stranger cried loudly and pompously. And in a moment all eyes were upon him. He prodded with his umbrella at the offending bill. "Do you hear me? Take it down, sir," he repeated, turning to the guard. He was a portly man, reddish about the gills. "Take it down, sir, or I will! It is disgraceful! I shall report this conduct to your employers."

The guard hesitated. "It don't harm you, sir," he pleaded, anxious, it was clear, to propitiate a man who would presently be good for half a crown.

"Don't harm me?" the choleric gentleman retorted. "Don't harm me? What's that to do with it? What right-what right have you, man, to put party filth like that on a public vehicle in which I pay to ride? 'The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill!' D-n the Bill, sir!" with violence. "Take it down! Take it down at once!" he repeated, as if his order closed the matter.

The guard frowned at the placard, which bore, largely printed, the legend which the gentleman found so little to his taste. He rubbed his head. "Well, I don't know, sir," he said. And then-the crowd about the coach was growing-he looked at the driver. "What do you say, Sammy?" he asked.

"Don't touch it," growled the driver, without deigning to turn his head.

"You see, sir, it is this way," the guard ventured civilly. "Mr. Palmer has a Whig meeting at Reading to-day and the town will be full. And if we don't want rotten eggs and broken windows-we'll carry that!"

"I'll not travel with it!" the stout gentleman answered positively. "Do you hear me, man? If you don't take it down I will!"

"Best not!" cried a voice from the little crowd about the coach. And when the angry gentleman turned to see who spoke, "Best not!" cried another behind him. And he wheeled about again, so quickly that the crowd laughed. This raised his wrath to a white heat.

He grew purple. "I shall have it taken down!" he said. "Guard, remove it!"

"Don't touch it," growled the driver-one of a class noted in that day for independence and surly manners. "If the gent don't choose to travel with it, let him stop here and be d-d!"

"Do you know," the insulted passenger cried, "that I am a Member of Parliament?"

"I'm hanged if you are!" coachee retorted. "Nor won't be again!"

The crowd roared at this repartee. The guard was in despair. "Anyway, we must go on, sir," he said. And he seized his horn. "Take your seats, gents! Take your seats!" he cried. "All for Reading! I'm sorry, sir, but I've to think of the coach."

"And the horses!" grumbled the driver. "Where's the gent's sense?"

They all scrambled to their seats except the ex-member. He stood, bursting with rage and chagrin. But at the last moment, when he saw that the coach would really go without him, he swallowed his pride, plucked open the coach-door, and amid the loud jeers of the crowd, climbed in. The driver, with a chuckle, bade the helpers let go, and the coach swung cheerily away through the streets of Maidenhead, the merry notes of the horn and the rattle of the pole-chains drowning the cries of the gutter-boys.

The little Frenchman turned round. "You vill have a refolution," he said solemnly. "And the gentleman inside he vill lose his head."

The coachman, who had hitherto looked askance at Froggy, as if he disdained his neighbourhood, now squinted at him as if he could not quite make him out. "Think so?" he said gruffly. "Why, Mounseer?"

"I have no doubt," the Frenchman answered glibly. "The people vill have, and the nobles vill not give! Or they vill give a leetle-a leetle! And that is the worst of all. I have seen two refolutions!" he continued with energy. "The first when I was a child-it is forty years! My bonne held me up and I saw heads fall into the basket-heads as young and as lofly as the young Mees there! And why? Because the people would have, and the King, he give that which is the worst of all-a leetle! And the trouble began. And then the refolution of last year-it was worth to me all that I had! The people would have, and the Polignac, our Minister-who is the friend of your Vellington-he would not give at all! And the trouble began."

The driver squinted at him anew. "D'you mean to say," he asked, "that you've seen heads cut off?"

"I have seen the white necks, as white and as small as the Mees there; I have seen the blood spout from them; bah! like what you call pump! Ah, it was ogly, it was very ogly!"

The coachman turned his head slowly and with difficulty, until he commanded a full view of Vaughan's pretty neighbour; at whom he gazed for some seconds as if fascinated. Then he turned to his horses and relieved his feelings by hitting one of the wheelers below the trace; while Vaughan, willing to hear what the Frenchman had to say, took up the talk.

"Perhaps here," he said, "those who have will give, and give enough, and all will go well."

"Nefer! Nefer!" the Frenchman answered positively. "By example, the Duke whose château we pass-what you call it-Jerusalem House?"

"Sion House," Vaughan answered, smiling. "The Duke of Northumberland."

"By example he return four members to your Commons House. Is it not so? And they do what he tell them. He have this for his nefew, and that for his niece, and the other thing for his *maître d'hôtel*! And it is he and the others like him who rule the country! Gives he up all that? To the *bourgeoisie*? Nefer! Nefer!" he continued with emphasis. "He will be the Polignac! They will all be

the Polignacs! And you will have a refolution. And by-and-by, when the *bourgeoisie* is frightened of the *canaille* and tired of the blood-letting, your Vellington he will be the Emperor. It is as plain as the two eyes in the face! So plain for me, I shall not take off my clothes the nights!"

"Well, King Billy for me!" said the driver. "But if he's willing, Mounseer, why shouldn't the people manage their own affairs?"

"The people! The people! They cannot! Your horses, will they govern themselves? Will you throw down the reins and leave it to them, up hill, down hill? The people govern themselves Bah!" And to express his extreme disgust at the proposition, the Frenchman, who had lost his all with Polignac, bent over the side and spat into the road. "It is no government at all!"

The driver looked darkly at his horses as if he would like to see them try it on. "I am afraid," said Vaughan, "that you think we are in trouble either way then, whether the Tories give or withhold?"

"Eizer way! Eizer way!" the Frenchman answered *con amore*. "It is fate! You are on the edge of the what you call it-*chute*! And you must go over! We have gone over. We have bumped once, twice! We shall bump once, twice more, *et voilà*-Anarchy! Now it is your turn, sir. The government has to be-shifted-from the one class to the other!"

"But it may be peacefully shifted?"

The little Frenchman shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "I have nefer seen the government shifted without all that that I have told you. There will be the guillotine, or the barricades. For me, I shall not take off my clothes the nights!"

He spoke with a sincerity so real and a persuasion so clear that even Vaughan was a little shaken, and wondered if those who watched the game from the outside saw more than the players. As for the coachman:

"Dang me," he said that evening to his cronies in the tap of the White Lion at Bristol, "if I feel so sure about this here Reform! We want none of that nasty neck-cutting here! And if I thought Froggy was right I'm blest if I wouldn't turn Tory!"

And for certain the Frenchman voiced what a large section of the timid and the well-to-do were thinking. For something like a hundred and fifty years a small class, the nobility and the greater gentry, turning to advantage the growing defects in the representation-the rotten boroughs and the close corporations-had ruled the country through the House of Commons. Was it to be expected that the basis of power could be shifted in a moment? Or that all these boroughs and corporations, in which the governing class were so deeply interested, could be swept away without a convulsion; without opening the floodgates of change, and admitting forces which no man could measure? Or, on the other side, was it likely that, these defects once seen and the appetite of the middle class for power once whetted, their claims could be refused without a struggle from which the boldest must flinch? No man could say for certain, and hence these fears in the air. The very winds carried them. They were being discussed in that month of April not only on the White Lion coach, not on the Bath road only, but on a hundred coaches, and a hundred roads over the length and breadth of England. Wherever the sway of Macadam and Telford extended, wherever the gigs of "riders" met, or farmers' carts stayed to parley, at fair and market, sessions and church, men shook their heads or raised their voices in high debate; and the word *Reform* rolled down the wind!

Vaughan soon overcame his qualms; for his opinions were fixed. But he thought that the subject might serve him with his neighbour, and he addressed her.

"You must not let them alarm you," he said. "We are still a long way, I fancy, from guillotines or barricades."

"I hope so," she answered. "In any case I am not afraid."

"Why, if I may ask?"

She glanced at him with a gleam of humour in her eyes. "Little shrubs feel little wind," she murmured.

"But also little sun, I fear," he replied.

"That does not follow," she said, without raising her eyes again. "Though it is true that I-I am so seldom free in a morning that a journey such as this, with the sunshine, is like heaven to me."

"The morning is a delightful time," he said.

"Oh!" she cried, as if she now knew that he felt with her. "That is it! The afternoon is different."

"Well, fortunately, you and I have-much of the morning left."

She made no reply to that, and he wondered in silence what was the employment which filled her mornings and fitted her to enjoy with so keen a zest this early ride. The Gloucester up-coach was coming to meet them, the guard tootling merrily on his horn, and a blue and yellow flag-the Whig colours-flying on the roof of the coach, which was crowded with smiling passengers. Vaughan saw the girl's eyes sparkle as the two coaches passed one another amid a volley of badinage; and demure as she was, he was sure that she had a store of fun within. He wished that she would remove her cheap thread gloves that he might see if her hands were as white as they were small. She was no common person, he was sure of that; her speech was correct, though formal, and her manner was quiet and refined. And her eyes-he must make her look at him again!

"You are going to Bristol?" he said. "To stay there?"

Perhaps he threw too much feeling into his voice. At any rate the tone of her answer was colder.

"Yes," she said, "I am."

"I am going as far as Chippenham," he volunteered.

"Indeed!"

There! He had lost all the ground he had gained. She thought him a possible libertine, who aimed at putting himself on a footing of intimacy with her. And that was the last thing-confound it, he meant that to do her harm was the last thing he had in his mind.

It annoyed him that she should think anything of that kind. And he cudgelled his brain for a subject at once safe and sympathetic, without finding one. But either she was not so deeply offended as he fancied, or she thought him sufficiently punished. For presently she addressed him; and he saw that she was ever so little embarrassed.

"Would you please to tell me," she said, in a low voice, "how much I ought to give the coachman?"

Oh, bless her! She did not think him a horrid libertine. "You?" he said audaciously. "Why nothing, of course."

"But-but I thought it was usual?"

"Not on this road," he answered, lying resolutely. "Gentlemen are expected to give half a crown, others a shilling. Ladies nothing at all. Sam," he continued, rising to giddy heights of invention, "would give it back to you, if you offered it."

"Indeed!" He fancied a note of relief in her tone, and judged that shillings were not very plentiful. Then, "Thank you," she added. "You must think me very ignorant. But I have never travelled."

"You must not say that," he returned. "Remember the Clapham Stage!"

She laughed at the jest, small as it was; and her laugh gave him the most delicious feeling-a sort of lightness within, half exhilaration, half excitement. And of a sudden, emboldened by it, he was grown so foolhardy that there is no knowing what he would not have said, if the streets of Reading had not begun to open before them and display a roadway abnormally thronged.

For Mr. Palmer's procession, with its carriages, riders, and flags, was entering ahead of them; and the train of tipsy rabble which accompanied it blocked King Street, and presently brought the coach to a stand. The candidate, lifting his cocked hat from time to time, was a hundred paces before them and barely visible through a forest of flags and banners. But a troop of mounted gentry in dusty black, and smiling dames in carriages-who hardly masked the disgust with which they viewed the forest of grimy hands extended to them to shake-were under the travellers' eyes, and showed in the sunlight both tawdry and false. Our party, however, were not long at ease to enjoy the spectacle. The

crowd surrounded the coach, leapt on the steps, and hung on to the boot. And presently the noise scared the horses, which at the entrance to the marketplace began to plunge.

"The Bill! The Bill!" cried the rabble. And with truculence called on the passengers to assent. "You lubbers," they bawled, "shout for the Bill! Or we'll have you over!"

"All right! All right!" replied Sammy, controlling his horses as well as he could. "We're all for the Bill here! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah! Palmer for ever, Tories in the river!" cried the mob. "Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" echoed the guard, willing to echo anything. "The Bill for ever! But let us pass, lads! Let us pass! We're for the Bear, and we've no votes."

"Britons never will be slaves!" shrieked a drunken butcher as the marketplace opened before them. The space was alive with flags and gay with cockades, and thronged by a multitude, through which the candidate's procession clove its way slowly. "We'll have votes now! Three cheers for Lord John!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"And down with Orange Peel!" squeaked a small tailor in a high falsetto.

The roar of laughter which greeted the sally startled the horses afresh. But the guard had dropped down by this time and fought his way to the head of one of the leaders; and two or three good-humoured fellows seconded his efforts. Between them the coach was piloted slowly but safely through the press; which, to do it justice, meant only to exercise the privileges which the Election season brought with it.

V ROSY-FINGERED DAWN

"*Beaucoup de bruit, pas de mal!*" Vaughan muttered in his neighbour's ear; and saw with as much surprise as pleasure that she understood.

And all would have gone well but for the imprudence of the inside passenger who had distinguished himself by his protest against the placard. The coach was within a dozen paces of the Bear, the crowd was falling back from it, the peril, if it had been real, seemed past, the most timid was breathing again, when he thrust out his foolish head, and flung a taunt-which those on the roof could not hear-at the rabble.

Whatever the words, their effect was disastrous. A bystander caught them up and repeated them, and in a trice half-a-dozen louts flung themselves on the door and strove to drag it open, and get at the man; while others, leaning over their shoulders, aimed missiles at the inside passengers.

The guard saw that more than the glass of his windows was at stake; but he could do nothing. He was at the leaders' heads. And the passengers on the roof, who had risen to their feet to see the fray, were as helpless. Luckily the coachman kept his head and his reins. "Turn 'em into the yard!" he yelled. "Turn 'em in!"

The guard did so, almost too quickly. The frightened horses wheeled round, and, faster than was prudent, dashed under the low arch, dragging the swaying coach after them.

There was a cry of "Heads! Heads!" and then, more imperatively, "Heads! Stoop! Stoop!"

The warning was needed. The outsides were on their feet engrossed in the struggle at the coach door. And so quickly did the coach turn that-though a score of spectators in the street and on the balcony of the inn saw the peril-it was only at the last moment that Vaughan and the two passengers at the back, men well used to the road, caught the warning, and dropped down. And it was only at the very last moment that Vaughan felt rather than saw that the girl was still standing. He had just time, by a desperate effort, and amid a cry of horror-for to the spectators she seemed to be already jammed between the arch and the seat-to drag her down. Instinctively, as he did so, he shielded her face with his arm; but the horror was so near that, as they swept under the low brow, he was not sure that she was safe.

He was as white as she was, when they emerged into the light again. But he saw that she was safe, though her bonnet was dragged from her head; and he cried unconsciously, "Thank God! Thank God!" Then, with that hatred of a scene which is part of the English character, he put her quickly back into her seat again, and rose to his feet, as if he wished to separate himself from her.

But a score of eyes had seen the act; and however much he might wish to spare her feelings, concealment was impossible.

"Christ!" cried the coachman, whose copper cheeks were perceptibly paler. "If your head's on your shoulders, Miss, it is to that young gentleman you owe it. Don't you ever go to sleep on the roof of a coach again! Never! Never!"

"Here, get a drop of brandy!" cried the landlady, who, from one of the doors flanking the archway, had seen all. "Do you stay where you are, Miss," she continued, "and I'll send it up to you."

Then amid a babel of exclamations and a chorus of blame and praise, the ladder was brought, and Vaughan made haste to descend. A waiter tripped out with the brown brandy and water on a tray; and the young lady, who had not spoken, but had remained, sitting white and still, where Vaughan had placed her, sipped it obediently. Unfortunately the landlady's eyes were sharp; and as Vaughan passed her to go into the house-for the coach must be driven up the yard and turned before they could set off again-she let fall a cry.

"Lord, sir!" she said, "your hand is torn dreadful! You've grazed every bit of skin off it!"

He tried to silence her; and failing, hurried into the house. She fussed after him to attend to him; and Sammy, who was not a man of the most delicate perceptions, seized the opportunity to drive home his former lesson. "There, Miss," he said solemnly, "I hope that'll teach you to look out another time! But better his hand than your head. You'd ha' been surely scalped!"

The girl, a shade whiter than before, did not answer. And he thought her, for so pretty a wench, "a right unfeelin' un!"

Not so the Frenchman. "I count him a very locky man!" he said obscurely. "A very locky man."

"Well," the coachman answered with a grunt, "if you call that lucky-"

"*Vraiment! Vraiment!* But I-alas!" the Frenchman answered with an eloquent gesture, "I have lost my all, and the good fortunes are no longer for me!"

"Fortunes!" the coachman muttered, looking askance at him. "A fine fortune, to have your hand played! But where's" – recollecting himself – "where's that there fool that caused the trouble! D-n me, if he shall go any further on my coach. I'd like to double-thong him, and it'd serve him right!"

So when the ex-M.P. presently appeared, Sammy let go his tongue to such purpose that the political gentleman; finding himself in a minority of one, retired into the house and, with many threats of what he would do when he saw the management, declined to go on.

"And a good riddance of a d-d Tory!" the coachman muttered. "Think all the world's made for them! Fifteen minutes he's cost us already! Take your seats, gents, take your seats! I'm off!"

Vaughan, with his hand hastily bandaged, was the last to come out. He climbed as quickly as he could to his place, and, without looking at his neighbour, he said some common-place word. She did not reply, and they swept under the arch. For a moment the sight of the thronged marketplace diverted him. Then he looked at her, and he saw that she was trembling.

If he was not quite so wise as the Frenchman, having had no *bonnes fortunes* to speak of, he had, nevertheless, keen perceptions. And he guessed that the girl, between her maiden shyness and her womanly gratitude, was painfully placed. It could not be otherwise. A girl who had spent her years, since childhood, within the walls of a school at Clapham, first as genteel apprentice, and then as assistant; who had been taught to consider young men as roaring lions with whom her own life could have nothing in common, and from whom it was her duty to guard the more giddy of her flock; who had to struggle at once with the shyness of youth, the modesty of her sex, and her inexperience – above all, perhaps with that dread of insult which becomes the instinct of lowly beauty – how was she to carry herself in circumstances so different from any which she had ever imagined? How was she to express a tithe of the feelings with which her heart was bursting, and which overwhelmed her as often as she thought of the hideous death from which he had snatched her?

She could not; and with inborn good taste she refrained from the commonplace word, the bald acknowledgment, in which a shallow nature might have taken refuge. On his side, he guessed some part of this, and discerned that if he would relieve her he must himself speak. Accordingly, when they had left the streets behind them and were swinging merrily along the Newbury Road, he leant towards her.

"May I beg," he said in a low voice, "that you won't think of what has happened? The coachman would have done as much, and scolded you! I happened to be next you. That was all."

In a strangled voice, "But your hand," she faltered. "I fear-I-" She shuddered, unable to go on.

"It is nothing!" he protested. "Nothing! In three days it will be well!"

She turned her eyes on him, eyes which possessed an eloquence of which their owner was unconscious. "I will pray for you," she murmured. "I can do no more."

The pathos of her simple gratitude was such that Vaughan could not laugh it off. "Thank you," he said quietly. "We shall then be more than quits." And having given her a few moments in which to recover herself, "We are nearly at Speenhamland," he resumed cheerfully. "There is the George and Pelican! It's a great baiting-house for coaches. I am afraid to say how much corn and hay they

give out in a day. They have a man who does nothing else but weigh it out." And so he chattered on, doing his utmost to talk of indifferent matters in an indifferent tone.

She could not repulse him after what had passed. And now and then, by a timid word, she gave him leave to talk. Presently he began to speak of things other than those under their eyes, and when he thought that he had put her at her ease, "You understand French?" he said looking at her suddenly.

"I spoke it as a child," she answered. "I was born abroad. I did not come to England until I was nine."

"To Clapham?"

"Yes. I have been employed in a school there."

Prudently he hastened to bring the talk back to the road again. And she took courage to steal a look at him when his eyes were elsewhere. He seemed so strong and gentle and courteous; this unknown creature which she had been taught to fear. And he was so thoughtful of her! He could throw so tender a note into his voice. Beside d'Orsay or Alvanley-but she had never heard of them-he might have passed muster but tolerably; but to her he seemed a very fine gentleman. She had a woman's eye for the fineness of his linen, and the smartness of his waistcoat-had not Sir James Graham, with his chest of Palermo stuffs, set the seal of Cabinet approval on fancy waistcoats? Nor was she blind to the easy carriage of his head, and his air of command.

And there she caught herself up: reflecting with a blush that it was by the easy path of thoughts such as these that the precipice was approached; that so it was the poor and pretty let themselves be led from the right road. Whither was she travelling? In what was this to end? She trembled. And if they had not at that moment swung out of Savernake Forest and sighted the red roofs of Marlborough, lying warm and sung at the foot of the steep London Hill, she did not know what she should have done, since she could not repulse him.

They rattled in merry style through the town, the leaders cantering, the bars swinging, the guard tootling, the sun shining; past a score of inn signs before which the heavy stages were baiting; past the two churches, while all the brisk pleasantness of this new, this living world, appealed to her to go its way. Ta-ra-ra! Ta-ra-ra! Swerving to the right they pulled up bravely, with steaming horses, before the door of the far-famed Castle Inn. Ta-ra-ra! Ta-ra-ra! "Half an hour for dinner, gentlemen!"

"Now," said Vaughan, thinking that all was well, or rather declining to think of anything but her shy glances and the delightful present. "You must cut my meat for me!"

She did not reply, and he saw that her eyes went to the basket at her feet. He guessed that she wished to avoid the expense of dining. "Or, perhaps, you are not coming in?" he said.

"I did not intend to do so," she replied. "I suppose," she continued timidly, "that I may stay here?"

"Certainly. You have something with you?"

"Yes."

He nodded pleasantly and left her; and she remained in her seat. As she ate, the target for many a sly glance of admiration, she was divided between gratitude and self-reproach; now thinking of him with a quickened heart, now taking herself to task for her weakness. The result was that when he strode out, confident and at ease, and looked up at her with laughing eyes, she blushed furiously-to her own unspeakable mortification.

Vaughan was no Lothario, and for a moment the telltale colour took him aback. Then he told himself that at Chippenham, less than twenty miles down the road, he was leaving her. It was absurd to suppose that, in the short space which remained, either could be harmed. And he mounted gaily, and masking his knowledge of her emotion with a skill which surprised himself, he chatted pleasantly, unaware that with every word he was stamping the impression of her face, her long eyelashes, her graceful head, her trick of this and that, more deeply upon his memory. While she, reassured by the same thought that they would part in an hour-and in an hour what harm could happen? – closed her eyes and drank the sweet draught-the sweeter for its novelty, and for the bitter which lurked at the

bottom of the cup. Meantime Sammy winked sagely at his horses, and the Frenchman cast envious glances over his shoulders, and Silbury Hill, Fyfield, and the soft folds of the downs swept by, and on warm commons and southern slopes the early bees hummed above the gorse.

Here was Chippenham at last; and the end was come. He must descend. A hasty touch, a murmured word, a pang half-felt; she veiled her eyes. If her colour fluttered and she trembled, why not? She had cause to be grateful to him. And if he felt as his foot touched the ground that the world was cold, and the prospect cheerless, why not, when he had to face Sir Robert, and when his political embarrassments, forgotten for a time, rose nearer and larger?

It had often fallen to him to alight before the Angel at Chippenham. From boyhood he had known the wide street, in which the fairs were held, the red Georgian houses, and the stone bridge of many arches over the Avon. But he had never seen these things, he had never alighted there, with less satisfaction than on this day.

Still this was the end. He raised his hat, saluted silently, and turned to speak to the guard. In the act he jostled a person who was approaching to accost him. Vaughan stared. "Hallo, White!" he said. "I was coming to see you."

White's hat was in his hand. "Your servant, sir," he said. "Your servant, sir. I am glad to be here to meet you, Mr. Vaughan."

"But you didn't expect me?"

"No, sir, no; I came to meet Mr. Cooke, who was to arrive by this coach. But I do not see him."

A light broke in upon Vaughan. "Gad! he must be the man we left behind at Reading," he said. "Is he a peppery chap?"

"He might be so called, sir," the agent answered with a smile. "I fancied that you knew him."

"No. Sergeant Wathen I know; not Mr. Cooke. Any way, he's not come, White."

"All the better, sir, if I can get a message to him by the up-coach. For he's not needed. I am glad to say that the trouble is at an end. My Lord Lansdowne has given up the idea of contesting the borough, and I came over to tell Mr. Cooke, thinking that he might prefer to go on to Bristol. He has a house at Bristol."

"Do you mean," Vaughan said, "that there will be no contest?"

"No, sir, no. Not now. And a good thing, too. Upset the town for nothing! My lord has no chance, and Pybus, who is his lordship's man here, he told me himself—"

He paused with his mouth open, and his eyes on a tall lady wearing a veil, who, after standing a couple of minutes on the further side of the street, was approaching the coach. To enter it she had to pass by him, and he stared, as if he saw a ghost. "By Gosh!" he muttered under his breath. And when, with the aid of the guard, she had taken her seat inside, "By Gosh!" he muttered again, "if that's not my lady—though I've not seen her for ten years—I've the horrors!"

He turned to Vaughan to see if he had noticed anything. But Vaughan, without waiting for the end of his sentence, had stepped aside to tell a helper to replace his valise on the coach. In the bustle he had noted neither White's emotion nor the lady.

At this moment he returned. "I shall go on to Bristol for the night, White," he said. "Sir Robert is quite well?"

"Quite well, sir, and I shall be happy to tell him of your promptness in coming."

"Don't tell him anything," the young man said, with a flash of peremptoriness. "I don't want to be kept here. Do you understand, White? I shall probably return to town to-morrow. Anyway, say nothing."

"Very good, sir," White answered. "But I am sure Sir Robert would be pleased to know that you had come down so promptly."

"Ah, well, you can let him know later. Good-bye, White."

The agent, with one eye on the young squire and one on the lady, whose figure was visible through the small coach-window, seemed to be about to refer to her. But he checked himself. "Good-bye, sir," he said. "And a pleasant journey! I'm glad to have been of service, Mr. Vaughan."

"Thank you, White, thank you," the young man answered. And he swung himself up, as the coach moved. A good-natured nod, and-Tantivy! Tantivy! Tantivy! The helpers sprang aside, and away they went down the hill, and over the long stone bridge, and so along the Bristol road; but now with the shades of evening beginning to spread on the pastures about them, and the cawing rooks, that had been abroad all day on the uplands, streaming across the pale sky to the elms beside the river.

But *varium et mutabile femina*. When he turned, eager to take up the fallen thread, Clotho could not have been more cold than his neighbour, nor Atropos with her shears more decisive. "I've had good news," he said, as he settled his coat about him. "I came down with a very unpleasant task before me. And it is lifted from me."

"Indeed!"

"So I am going on to Bristol instead of staying at Chippenham."

No answer.

"It is a great relief to me," he continued cheerfully.

"Indeed!" She spoke in the most distant of voices.

He raised his brows in perplexity. What had happened to her? She had been so grateful, so much moved, a few minutes before. The colour had fluttered in her cheek, the tear had been visible in her eye, she had left her hand the fifth of a second in his. And now!

Now she was determined that she would blush and smile and be kind no more. She was grateful-God knew she was grateful, let him think what he would. But there were limits. Her weakness, as long as she believed that Chippenham must part them, had been pardonable. But if he had it in his mind to attend her to Bristol, to follow her or haunt her-as she had known foolish young cits at Clapham to haunt the more giddy of her flock-then her mistake was clear; and his conduct, now merely suspicious, would appear in its black reality. She hoped that he was innocent. She hoped that his change of plan at Chippenham had been no subterfuge; that he was not a roaring lion. But appearances were deceitful and her own course was plain.

It was the plainer, as she had not been blind to the respect with which all at the Angel had greeted her companion; even White, a man of substance, with a gold chain and seals hanging from his fob, had stood bareheaded while he talked to him. It was plain that he was a fine gentleman; one of those whom young persons in her rank of life must shun.

So he drew scarcely five words out of her in as many miles. At last, thrice rebuffed, "I am afraid you are tired," he said. Was it for this that he had chosen to go on to Bristol?

"Yes," she answered. "I am rather tired. If you please I would prefer not to talk."

He was a little huffed then, and let her be; nor did he guess, though he was full of conjectures about her, how she hated her seeming ingratitude. But there was nought else for it; better seem thankless now than be worse hereafter. For she was growing frightened. She was beginning to have more than an inkling of the road by which young things were led to be foolish. Her ear retained the sound of his voice though he was silent. The fashion in which he had stooped to her-though he was looking another way now-clung to her memory. His laugh, though he was grave now, rang for her, full of glee and good-fellowship. She could have burst into tears.

They stayed at Marshfield to take on the last team. And she tried to divert her mind by watching a woman in a veil who walked up and down beside the coach, and seemed to return her curiosity. But she tried to little purpose, for she felt strained and weary, and more than ever inclined to cry. Doubtless the peril through which she had passed had shaken her.

So that she was thankful when, after descending perilous Tog Hill, they saw from Kingswood heights the lights of Bristol shining through the dusk; and she knew that she was at her journey's end. To arrive in a strange place on the edge of night is trying to anyone. But to alight friendless

and alone, amid the bustle of a city, and to know that new relations must be created and a new life built up-this may well raise in the most humble and contented bosom a feeling of loneliness and depression. And doubtless that was why Mary Smith, after evading Vaughan with a success beyond her hopes, felt as she followed her modest trunk through the streets that-but she bent her head to hide the unaccustomed tears.

VI THE PATRON OF CHIPPINGE

Much about the time that the "Spectator" was painting in Sir Roger the most lovable picture of an old English squire which our gallery contains, Cornelius Vermuyden, of a younger branch of the Vermuydens who drained the fens, was making a fortune in the Jamaica trade. Having made it in a dark office at Bristol, and being, like all Dutchmen, of a sedentary turn, he proceeded to found a family, purchase a borough, and, by steady support of Whig principles and the Protestant succession, to earn a baronetcy in the neighbouring county of Wilts.

Doubtless the first Vermuyden had things to contend with, and at assize ball and sessions got but two fingers from the De Coverleys and their long-descended dames. But he went his way stolidly, married his son into a family of like origin-the Beckfords-and, having seen little George II. firmly on the throne, made way for his son.

This second Sir Cornelius rebuilt Stapylton, the house which his father had bought from the decayed family of that name, and after living for some ten years into the reign of Farmer George, vanished in his turn, leaving Cornelius Robert to succeed him, Cornelius George, the elder son, having died in his father's lifetime.

Sir Cornelius Robert was something after the pattern of the famous Mr. Onslow-

What can Tommy Onslow do?
He can drive a chaise and two.
What can Tommy Onslow more?
He can drive a chaise and four.

Yet he fitted the time, and, improving his father's pack of trencher-fed hounds by a strain of Mr. Warde's blood, he hunted the country so conscientiously that at his death a Dutch bottle might have been set upon his table without giving rise to the slightest reflection. He came to an end, much lamented, with the century, and Sir Robert, fourth and present baronet, took over the estates.

By that time, rid of the foreign prenomens, well allied by three good marriages, and since the American war of true blue Tory leanings, and thorough Church and King principles, the family was able to hold up its head among the best in the south of England. There might be some who still remembered that-

Saltash was a borough town
When Plymouth was a breezy down.

But the property was good, the borough safe, and any time these twenty years their owner might have franked his letters "Chippinge" had he willed it. As it was, he passed, almost as much as Mr. Western in the east or Sir Thomas Acland in the west, for the type of a country gentleman. The most powerful Minister gave him his whole hand; and at county meetings, at Salisbury or Devizes, no voice was held more powerful, nor any man's hint more quickly taken than Sir Robert Vermuyden's.

He was a tall and very thin man, of almost noble aspect, with a nose after the fashion of the Duke's, and a slight stoop. In early days he had been something of a beau, though never of the Prince's following, and he still dressed finely and with taste. With a smaller sense of personal dignity, or with wider sympathies, he might have been a happier man. But he had married too late-at forty-five; and the four years which followed, and their sequel, had darkened the rest of his life, drawn crow's-feet about his eyes and peevish lines about his mouth. Henceforth he had lived alone, nursing his pride;

and the solitude of this life-which was not without its dignity, since no word of scandal touched it-had left him narrow and vindictive, a man just but not over-generous, and pompous without complacency.

The neighbourhood knew that he and Lady Sybil-he had married the beautiful daughter of the last Earl of Portrush-had parted under circumstances which came near to justifying divorce. Some held that he had divorced her; but in those days an Act of Parliament was necessary, and no such Act stood on the Statute-book. Many thought that he ought to have divorced her. And while the people who knew that she still lived and still plagued him were numerous, few save Isaac White were aware that it was because his marriage had been made and marred at Bowood-and not purely out of principle-that Sir Robert opposed the very name of Lansdowne, and would have wasted a half of his fortune to wreck his great neighbour's political power.

Not that his Tory principles were not strong. During five Parliaments he had filled one of his own seats, and had spoken from time to time after a dignified fashion, with formal gestures and a copious sprinkling of classical allusions. The Liberal Toryism of Canning had fallen below his ideal, but he had continued to sit until the betrayal of the party by Peel and the Duke-on the Catholic Claims-drove him from the House in disgust, and thenceforth Warren's Hotel, his residence when in town, saw him but seldom. He had fancied then that nothing worse could happen; that the depths were plumbed, and that he and those who thought with him might punish the traitor and take no harm. With the Duke of Cumberland, the best hated man in England-which was never tired of ridiculing his moustachios-Eldon, Wetherell, and the ultra-Tories, he had not rested until he had seen the hated pair flung from office; nor was any man more surprised and confounded when the result of the work began to show itself. The Whigs, admitted to power by this factious movement, and after an exile so long that Byron could write of them-

Naught's permanent among the human race
Except the Whigs not getting into place

-brought in no mild and harmless measure of reform, promising little and giving nothing, such as foe and friend had alike expected; but a measure of reform so radical that O'Connell blessed it, and Cobbett might have fathered it: a measure which, if it passed, would sweep away Sir Robert's power and the power of his class, destroy his borough, and relegate him to the common order of country squires.

He was at first incredulous, then furious, then aghast. To him the Bill was not only the doom of his own influence but the knell of the Constitution. Behind it he saw red revolution and the crash of things. Lord Grey was to him Mirabeau, Lord John was Lafayette, Brougham was Danton; and of them and of their kind, when they had roused the many-headed, he was sure that the end would be as the end of the Gironde.

He was not the less furious, not the less aghast, when the moderates of his party pointed out that he had himself to thank for the catastrophe. From the refusal to grant the smallest reform, from the refusal to transfer the franchise of the rotten borough of Retford to the unrepresented city of Birmingham-a refusal which he had urged his members to support-the chain was complete; for in consequence of that refusal Mr. Huskisson had left the Duke's Cabinet. The appointment of Mr. Fitzgerald to fill his seat had rendered the Clare election necessary. O'Connell's victory at the Clare election had converted Peel and the Duke to the necessity of granting the Catholic Claims. That conversion had alienated the ultra-Tories, and among these Sir Robert. The opposition of the ultra-Tories had expelled Peel and the Duke from power-which had brought in the Whigs-who had brought in the Reform Bill.

Hinc illæ lacrimæ! For, in place of the transfer of the franchise of one rotten borough to one large city-a reform which now to the most bigoted seemed absurdly reasonable-here were sixty

boroughs to be swept away, and nearly fifty more to be shorn of half their strength, a Constitution to be altered, an aristocracy to be dethroned!

And Calne, Lord Lansdowne's pocket borough, was spared!

Sir Robert firmly believed that the limit had been fixed with an eye to Calne. They who framed the Bill, sitting in wicked, detestable confabulation, had fixed the limit of Schedule B so as to spare Calne and Tavistock-*Arcades ambo*, Whig boroughs both. Or why did they just escape? In the whole matter it was this, strangely enough, which troubled him most sorely. For the loss of his own borough-if the worst came to the worst-he could put up with it. He had no children, he had no one to come after him except Arthur Vaughan, the great-grandson of his grandmother. But the escape of Calne, this clear proof of the hypocrisy of the righteous Grey, the blatant Durham, the whey-faced Lord John, the demagogue Brougham-this injustice kept him in a state of continual irritation.

He was thinking of this as he paced slowly up and down the broad walk beside the Garden Pool, at Stapylton-a solitary figure dwarfed by the great elms. The placid surface of the pool, which mirrored the shaven lawns beyond it and the hoary church set amidst the lawns, the silence about him, broken only by the notes of song-birds or a faint yelp from the distant kennels, the view over the green undulations of park and covert-all vainly appealed to him to-day, though on summer evenings his heart took sad and frequent leave of them. For that which threatened him every day jostled aside for the present that which must happen one day. The home of his fathers might be his for some years yet, but shorn of its chief dignity, of its pride, its mastery; while Calne-Calne would survive, to lift still higher the fortunes of those who had sold their king and country, and betrayed their order.

Daily a man and horse awaited the mail-coach at Chippenham that he might have the latest news; and, seeing a footman hurrying towards him from the house, he supposed that the mail was in. But when the man, after crossing the long wooden bridge which spanned the pool, approached with no diminution of speed, he remembered that it was too early for the post; and hating to be disturbed in his solitary reveries, he awaited the servant impatiently.

"What it is?" he asked.

"If you please, Sir Robert, Lady Lansdowne's carriage is at the door."

Only Sir Robert's darkening colour betrayed his astonishment. He had made his feelings so well known that none but the most formal civilities now passed between Stapylton and Bowood.

"Who is it?"

"Lady Lansdowne, Sir Robert. Her ladyship bade us say that she wishes to see you urgently, sir." The man, as well as the master, knew that the visit was unusual.

The baronet was a proud man, and he bethought him that the drawing-rooms, seldom used and something neglected, were not in the state in which he would wish his enemy's wife to see them. "Where have you put her ladyship?" he asked.

"In the hall, Sir Robert."

"Very good. I will come."

The man hastened away over the bridge, and Sir Robert followed, more at leisure, but still quickly. When he had passed the angle of the church which stood in a line with the three blocks of building, connected by porticos, which formed the house, and which, placed on a gentle eminence, looked handsomely over the park, he saw that a carriage with four greys ridden by postillions and attended by two outriders stood before the main door. In the carriage, her face shaded by the large Tuscan hat of the period, sat a young lady reading. She heard Sir Robert's footstep, and looked up, and in some embarrassment met his eyes.

He removed his hat. "It is Lady Louisa, is it not?" he said, looking gravely at her.

"Yes," she said; and she smiled prettily at him.

"Will you not go into the house?"

"Thank you," she replied, with a faint blush; "I think my mother wishes to see you alone, Sir Robert."

"Very good." And with a bow, cold but perfectly courteous, he turned and passed up the broad, shallow steps, which were of the same time-tinted lichen-covered stone as the rest of the building. Mapp, the butler, who had been looking out for him, opened the door, and he entered the hall.

In his heart, which was secretly perturbed, was room for the wish that he had been found in other than the high-buttoned gaiters and breeches of his country life. But he suffered no sign of that or of his more serious misgivings to appear, as he advanced to greet the still beautiful woman, who sat daintily warming one sandalled foot at the red embers on the hearth. She was far from being at ease herself. Warnings which her husband had addressed to her at parting recurred and disturbed her. But it is seldom that a woman of the world betrays her feelings, and her manner was perfect as he bent low over her hand.

"It is long," she said gently, "much longer than I like to remember, Sir Robert, since we met."

"It is a long time," he answered gravely; and when she had reseated herself he sat down opposite her.

"It is an age," she said slowly; and she looked round the hall, with its panelled walls, its deep window-seats, and its panoply of fox-masks and antlers, as if she recalled the past, "It is an age," she repeated. "Politics are sad dividers of friends."

"I fear," he replied, in a tone as cold as courtesy permitted, "that they are about to be greater dividers."

She looked at him quickly, with appeal in her eyes. "And yet," she said, "we saw more of you once."

"Yes." He was wondering much, behind the mask of his civility, what had drawn her hither. He knew that it could be no light, no passing matter which had brought her over thirteen miles of Wiltshire roads to call upon a man with whom intercourse had been limited, for years past, to a few annual words, a formal invitation as formally declined, a measured salutation at race or ball. She must have a motive, and a strong one. It was only the day before that he had learned that Lord Lansdowne meant to drop his foolish opposition at Chippinge; was it possible that she was here to make a favour of this? And perhaps a bargain? If that were her errand, and my lord had sent her, thinking to make refusal less easy, Sir Robert felt that he would know how to answer. He waited.

VII THE WINDS OF AUTUMN

Lady Lansdowne looked pensively at the tapering sandal which she held forward to catch the heat. "Time passes so very, very quickly," she said with a sigh.

"With some," Sir Robert answered. "With others," he bowed, "it stands still."

His gallantry did not deceive her. She knew it for the salute which duellists exchange before the fray, and she saw that if she would do anything she must place herself within his guard. She looked at him with sudden frankness. "I want you to bear with me for a few minutes, Sir Robert," she said in a tone of appeal. "I want you to remember that we were once friends, and, for the sake of old days, to believe that I am here to play a friend's part. You won't answer me? Very well. I do not ask you to answer me." She pointed to the space above the mantel. "The portrait which used to hang there?" she said. "Where is it? What have you done with it? But there, I said I would not ask, and I am asking!"

"And I will answer!" he replied. This was the last, the very last thing for which he had looked; but he would show her that he was not to be overridden. "I will tell you," he repeated. "Lady Lansdowne, I have destroyed it."

"I do not blame you," she rejoined. "It was yours to do with as you would. But the original-no, Sir Robert," she said, staying him intrepidly-she had taken the water now, and must swim-"you shall not frighten me! She was, she is your wife. But not yours, not your property to do with as you will, in the sense in which that picture-but there, I am blaming where I should entreat. I-"

He stayed her by a peremptory gesture. "Are you here-from her?" he asked huskily.

"I am not."

"She knows?"

"No, Sir Robert, she does not."

"Then why," – there was pain, real pain mingled with the indignation in his tone-"why, in God's name, Madam, have you come?"

She looked at him with pitying eyes. "Because," she said, "so many years have passed, and if I do not say a word now I shall never say it. And because-there is still time, but no more than time."

He looked at her fixedly. "You have another reason," he said. "What is it?"

"I saw her yesterday. I was in Chippenham when the Bristol coach passed, and I saw her face for an instant at the window."

He breathed more quickly; it was evident that the news touched him home. But he would not blench nor lower his eyes. "Well?" he said.

"I saw her for a few seconds only, and she did not see me. And of course-I did not speak to her. But I knew her face, though she was changed."

"And because" – his voice was harsh-"you saw her for a few minutes at a window, you come to me?"

"No, but because her face called up the old times. And because we are all growing older. And because she was-not guilty."

He started. This was getting within his guard with a vengeance. "Not guilty?" he cried in a tone of extreme anger. And he rose. But as she did not move he sat down again.

"No," she replied firmly. "She was not guilty."

His face was deeply red. For a moment he looked at her as if he would not answer her, or, if he answered, would bid her leave his house. Then, "If she had been," he said grimly, "guilty, Madam, in the sense in which you use the word, guilty of the worst, she had ceased to be my wife these fifteen years, she had ceased to bear my name, ceased to be the curse of my life!"

"Oh, no, no!"

"It is yes, yes!" And his face was dark. "But as it was, she was guilty enough! For years" – he spoke more rapidly as his passion grew – "she made her name a byword and dragged mine in the dirt. She made me a laughing-stock and herself a scandal. She disobeyed me – but what was her whole life with me, Lady Lansdowne, but one long disobedience? When she published that light, that foolish book, and dedicated it to – to that person – a book which no modest wife should have written, was not her main motive to harass and degrade me? Me, her husband? While we were together was not her conduct from the first one long defiance, one long harassment of me? Did a day pass in which she did not humiliate me by a hundred tricks, belittle me by a hundred slights, ape me before those whom she should not have stooped to know, invite in a thousand ways the applause of the fops she drew round her? And when" – he rose, and paced the room – "when, tried beyond patience by what I heard, I sent to her at Florence and bade her return to me, and cease to make herself a scandal with that person, or my house should no longer be her home, she disobeyed me flagrantly, wilfully, and at a price she knew! She went out of her way to follow him to Rome, she flaunted herself in his company, ay, and flaunted herself in such guise as no Englishwoman had been known to wear before! And after that – after that –"

He stopped, proud as he was, mastered by his feelings; she had got within his guard indeed. For a while he could not go on. And she, picturing the old days which his passionate words brought back, days when her children had been infants, saw, as it had been yesterday, the young bride, beautiful as a rosebud and wild and skittish as an Irish colt – and the husband staid, dignified, middle-aged, as little in sympathy with his captive's random acts and flighty words as if he had spoken another tongue.

Thus yoked, and resisting the lightest rein, the young wife had shown herself capable of an infinity of folly. Egged on by the plaudits of a circle of admirers, she had now made her husband ridiculous by childish familiarities: and again, when he found fault with these, by airs of public offence, which covered him with derision. But beauty's sins are soon forgiven; and fretting and fuming, and leading a wretched life, he had yet borne with her, until something which she chose to call a passion took possession of her. "The Giaour" and "The Corsair" were all the rage that year; and with the publicity with which she did everything she flung herself at the head of her soul's affinity; a famous person, half poet, half dandy, who was staying at Bowood.

The world which knew her decided that the affair was more worthy of laughter than of censure, and laughed immoderately. But to the husband – the humour of husbands is undeveloped – it was terrible. She wrote verses to the gentleman, and he to her; and she published, with ingenuous pride, the one and the other. Possibly this or the laughter determined the admirer. He fled, playing the innocent Æneas; and her lamentations, crystallising in the shape of a silly romance which made shop-girls weep and great ladies laugh, caused a separation between the husband and wife. Before this had lasted many months the illness of their only child brought them together again; and when, a little later, the doctors advised a southern climate, Sir Robert reluctantly entrusted the girl to her. She went abroad with the child, and the parents never met again.

Lady Lansdowne, recalling the story, could have laughed with her mind and wept with her heart; scenes so absurd under the leafy shades of Bowood or Lacock jostled the tragedy; and the ludicrous – with the husband an unwilling actor in it – so completely relieved the pathetic! But her bent towards laughter was short. Sir Robert, unable to bear her eyes, had turned away; and she must say something.

"Think," she said gently, "how young she was!"

"I have thought of it a thousand times!" he retorted. "Do you suppose," turning on her with harshness, "that there is a day on which I do not think of it!"

"So young!"

"She had been three years a mother!"

"For the dead child's sake, then," she pleaded with him, "if not for hers."

"Lady Lansdowne!" There were both anger and pain in his voice as he halted and stood before her. "Why do you come to me? Why do you trouble me? Why? Is it because you feel yourself –"

responsible? Because you know, because you feel, that but for you my home had not been left to me desolate? Nor a foolish life been ruined?"

"God forbid!" she said solemnly. And in her turn she rose in agitation; moved for once out of the gracious ease and self-possession of her life, so that in the contrast there was something unexpected and touching. "God forbid!" she repeated. "But because I feel that I might have done more. Because I feel that a word from me might have checked her, and it was not spoken. True, I was young, and it might have made things worse-I do not know. But when I saw her face at the window yesterday-and she was changed, Sir Robert-I felt that I might have been in her place, and she in mine!" Her voice trembled. "I might have been lonely, childless, growing old; and alone! Or again, if I had done something, if I had spoken as I would have another speak, were the case my girl's, she might have been as I am! Now," she added tremulously, "you know why I came. Why I plead for her! In our world we grow hard, very hard; but there are things which touch us still, and her face touched me yesterday-I remembered what she was." She paused a moment, and then, "After long years," she continued softly, "it cannot be hard to forgive; and there is still time. She did nothing that need close your door, and what she did is forgotten. Grant that she was foolish, grant that she was wild, indiscreet, what you will-she is alone now, alone and growing old, Sir Robert, and if not for her sake, for the sake of your dead child-"

He stopped her by a peremptory gesture, but for the moment he seemed unable to speak. At length, "You touch the wrong chord," he said hoarsely. "It is for the sake of my dead child I shall never, never forgive her! She knew that I loved it. She knew that it was all to me. It grew worse! Did she tell me? It was in danger; did she warn me? No! But when I heard of her disobedience, of her folly, of things which made her a byword, and I bade her return, or my house should no longer be her home, then, then she flung the news of the child's death at me, and rejoiced that she had it to fling. Had I gone out then and found her in the midst of her wicked gaiety, God knows what I should have done! I did try to go. But the Hundred Days had begun, I had to return. Had I gone, and learned that in her mad infatuation she had neglected the child, left it to servants, let it fade, I think-I think, Madam, I should have killed her!"

Lady Lansdowne raised her hands. "Hush! Hush!" she said.

"I loved the child. Therefore she was glad when it died, glad that she had the power to wound me. Its death was no more to her than a weapon with which to punish me! There was a tone in her letter-I have it still-which betrayed that. And, therefore-therefore, for the child's sake, I will never forgive her!"

"I am sorry," she murmured in a voice which acknowledged defeat. "I am very sorry."

He stood for a moment gazing at the blank space above the fireplace; his head sunk, his shoulders brought forward. He looked years older than the man who had walked under the elms. At length he made an effort to speak in his usual tone. "Yes," he said, "it is a sorry business."

"And I," she said slowly, "can do nothing."

"Nothing," he replied. "Time will cure this, and all things."

"You are sure that there is no mistake?" she pleaded. "That you are not judging her harshly?"

"There is no mistake."

Then she saw the hopelessness of argument and held out her hand.

"Forgive me," she said simply. "I have given you pain, and for nothing. But the old days were so strong upon me-after I saw her-that I could not but come. Think of me at least as a friend, and forgive me."

He bowed low over her hand, but he gave her no assurance. And seeing that he was mastering his agitation, and fearing that if he had leisure to think he might resent her interference, she wasted no time in adieux. She glanced round the well-remembered hall-the hall once smart, now shabby-in which she had seen the flighty girl play many a mad prank. Then she turned sorrowfully to the door, more than suspecting that she would never pass through it again.

He had rung the bell, and Mapp, the butler, and the two men were in attendance. But he handed her to the carriage himself, and placed her in it with old-fashioned courtesy, and with the same scrupulous observance stood bareheaded until it moved away. None the less, his face by its set expression betrayed the nature of the interview; and the carriage had scarcely swept clear of the grounds and entered the park when Lady Louisa turned to her mother.

"Was he very angry?" she asked, eager to be instructed in the mysteries of that life which she was entering.

Lady Lansdowne essayed to snub her. "My dear," she said, "it is not a fit subject for you."

"Still, mother dear, you might tell me. You told me something, and it is not fair to turn yourself into Mrs. Fairchild in a moment. Besides, while you were with him I came on a passage so beautiful, and so pat, it almost made me cry."

"My dear, don't say 'pat,' say 'apposite.'"

"Then apposite, mother," Lady Louisa answered. "Do you read it. There it is."

Lady Lansdowne sniffed, but suffered the book to be put into her hand. Lady Louisa pointed with enthusiasm to a line. "Is it a case like that, mother?" she asked eagerly.

But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining.
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder.
A dreary sea now flows between,
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

The mother handed the book back to the daughter without looking at her. "No," she said; "I don't think it is a case like that."

But a moment later she wiped her eyes furtively, and then she told her daughter more, it is to be feared, than Mrs. Fairchild would have approved.

* * * * *

Sir Robert, when they were gone, went heavily to the library, a panelled room looking to the back, in which it was his custom to sit. For many years he had passed some hours of every day, when he was at home, in that room; and until now it had never occurred to his mind that it was dull or shabby. But it was old Mapp's habit to lower the blinds for his master's after-luncheon nap, and they were still down; and the half light which filtered in was like the sheet which rather accentuates than hides the sharp features of the dead. The faded engravings and the calf-bound books which masked the walls, the escritoire, handsome and massive, but stained with ink and strewn with dog's eared accounts, the leathern-covered chair long worn out of shape by his weight, the table beside it with yesterday's "Standard," two or three volumes of the "Anti-Jacobin," and the "Quarterly," a month old and dusty-all to his opened eyes wore a changed aspect. They spoke of the slow decay of years, unchecked by a woman's eye, a woman's hand. They told of the slow degradation of his lonely life. They indicated a like change in himself.

He stood a few moments on the hearth, looking about him with a shocked, pained face. The months and the years had passed irrevocably, while he sat in that chair, poring in a kind of lethargy over those books, working industriously at those accounts. Asked, he had answered that he was growing old, and grown old. But he had never for a moment comprehended, as he comprehended now, that he was old. He had never measured the difference between this and that; between those

days troubled by a hundred annoyances, vexations, cares, when in spite of all he had lived, and these days of sullen stagnancy and mere vegetation.

He found the room, he found the reflection, intolerable. And he went out, took with an unsteady hand his garden hat and returned to that broad walk under the elms beside the pool which was his favourite lounge. Perhaps he fancied that the wonted scene would deaden the pain of memory and restore him to his wonted placidity. But his thoughts had been too violently broken. His hands shook, his lip trembled with the tearless passion of later life. And when his agitation began to die down and something like calmness supervened, this did but enable him to feel more keenly the pangs, not of remorse, but of regret; of bitter, unavailing regret for all the things of which the woman who had lain on his bosom had robbed his life.

Stapylton stood in a side valley projected among the low green hills which fringe the vale of the Wiltshire Avon. From where he stood all within sight, the gentle downs above the house, the arable land which fringed them, the rich pastures below-all, mill and smithy and inn, snug farm and thatched cottage, called him lord. Nay, from the south end of the pool, where a wicket gave entrance to the park-whence also a side view of the treble front of the house could be obtained-the spire of Chippinge church was visible, rising from its ridge in the Avon alley; and to the base of that spire all was his, all had been his father's and his grandfather's. But not an acre, not a rood, would be his child's.

This was no new thought. It was a thought that had saddened him on many and many a summer evening when the shadow of the elms lay far across the sward, and the silence of the stately house, the pale water, the far-stretching farms whispered of the passing of the generations, of the passage of time, of the inevitable end. Where he walked his father had walked; and soon he would go whither his father had gone. And the heir would walk where he walked, listen to the same twilight carollings, hear the first hoot of the distant owl.

Cedes coemptis saltibus, el domo
Villaque, flavus quam Tiberis lavit,
Cedes, et exstructis in altum
Divitiis potietur heres.

But no heir of his blood. No son of his. No man of the Vermuyden name. And for that he had to thank her.

It was this which to-day gave the old thought new poignancy. For that he had to thank her. Truly, in the words wrung from him by the bitterness of his feelings, she had left his house unto him desolate. If even the little girl had lived, the child would have succeeded; and that had been something, that had been much. But the child was dead; and in his heart he laid her death at his wife's door. And a stranger, or one in essentials a stranger, the descendant by a second marriage of his grandmother, Katherine Beckford, was the heir.

Presently the young man would succeed and the old chattels would be swept away to cottage or lumber-room. The old horses would be shot, the old dogs would be hanged, the old servants discharged, perhaps the very trees under which he walked and which he loved would be cut down. The house, the stables, the kennels, all but the cellars would be refurnished; and in the bustle and glitter of the new *régime*, begun in the sunshine, the twilight of his own latter days would be forgotten in a month.

We die and are forgotten, 'tis Heaven's decree,
And thus the lot of others will be the lot of me!

Sunday by Sunday he had read those lines on the grave of a kinsman, a man whom he had known. He had often repeated them, he could as soon forget them as his prayers. To-day the old

memories and the old times, which Lady Lansdowne had made to rise from the dead, gave them a new meaning and a new bitterness.

VIII

A SAD MISADVENTURE

Arthur Vaughan was not a little relieved by the tidings which Isaac White had conveyed to him at Chippenham. The news freed him from a duty which did not appear the less distasteful because it was no longer inevitable. To cast against Sir Robert the vote which he owed to Sir Robert must have exposed him to odium, whatever the matter at stake. But at this election, at which the issue was, aye or no, was the borough to be swept away or not, to vote "aye" was an act from which the least sensitive must have shrunk, and which the most honest must have performed with reluctance. Add the extreme exasperation of public feeling, of which every day and every hour brought to light the most glaring proofs, and he had been fortunate indeed if he had not incurred some general blame as well as the utmost weight of Sir Robert's displeasure.

He was spared all this, and he was thankful. Yet, when he rose on the morning after his arrival at Bristol, his heart was not as light as a feather. On the contrary, as he looked from the window of the White Lion into the bustle of Broad Street, he yawned dolefully; admitting that life, and particularly the prospect before him, of an immediate return to London, was dull. Why go back? Why stay here? Why do anything? The Woolsack? Bah! The Cabinet? Pooh! They were but gaudy baits for the shallow and the hard-hearted. Moreover, they were so distant, so unattainable, that pursuit of them seemed the merest moonshine; more especially on this fine April morning, made for nothing but a coach ride through an enchanted country, by the side of the sweetest face, the brightest eyes, the most ravishing figure, the prettiest bonnet that ever tamed the gruffest of coachmen.

Heigh-ho! If it were all to do over again how happy would he be! How happy had he been, and not known it, the previous morning! It was pitiful to think of him in his ignorance, with that day, that blissful day, before him.

Well, it was over. And he must return to town. For he would play no foolish tricks. The girl was not in his rank in life, and he could not follow her without injury to her. He was no preacher, and he had lived for years among men whose lives, if not worse than the lives of their descendants, wore no disguise; who, if they did not sin more, sinned more openly. But he had a heart, and to mar an innocent life for his pleasure had shocked him; even if the girl's modesty and self-respect, disclosed by a hundred small things, had not made the notion of wronging her abhorrent. None the less he took his breakfast in a kind of dream, whispered "Mary!" three times in different tones, and, being suddenly accosted by the waiter, was irritable.

With all this he was wise enough to know his own weakness, and that the sooner he was out of Bristol the better. He sent to the Bush office to book a place by the midday coach to town; and then only, when he had taken the irrevocable step, he put on his hat to kill the intervening time in Bristol.

Unfortunately, as he crossed the hall, intending to walk towards Clifton, he heard himself named; and turning, he saw that the speaker was the lady in black, and wearing a veil, whom he had remarked walking up and down beside the coach, while the horses were changing at Marshfield.

"Mr. Vaughan?" she said.

He raised his hat, much surprised. "Yes," he answered. He fancied that she was inspecting him very closely through her veil. "I am Mr. Vaughan."

"Pardon me," she continued-her voice was refined and low-"but they gave me your name at the office. I have something which belongs to the lady who travelled with you yesterday, and I am anxious to restore it."

He blushed; nor could he have repressed the blush if his life had hung upon it. "Indeed?" he murmured. His confusion did not permit him to add another word.

"Doubtless it was left in the coach," the lady explained, "and was taken to my room with my luggage. Unfortunately I am leaving Bristol at once, within a few minutes, and I cannot myself return it. I shall be much obliged if you will see that she has it safely."

She spoke as if the thing were a matter of course. But Vaughan had now recovered himself. "I would with pleasure," he said; "but I am myself leaving Bristol at midday, and I really do not know how-how I can do it."

"Then perhaps you will arrange the matter," the lady replied in a tone of displeasure. "I have sent the parcel to your room and I have not time to regain it. I must go at once. There is my maid! Good morning!" And with a distant bow she glided from him, and disappeared through the nearest doorway.

He stood where she had left him, looking after her in bewilderment. For one thing he was sure that she was a stranger, and yet she had addressed him in the tone of one who had a right to be obeyed. Then how odd it was! What a coincidence! He had made up his mind to end the matter, to go and walk the Hot Wells like a good boy; and this happened and tempted him!

Yes, tempted him.

He would- But he could not tell what he would do until he had seen if the parcel were really in his room. The parcel! The mere thought that it was hers sent a foolish thrill through him. He would go and see, and then-

But he was interrupted. There were people standing or sitting round the hall, a low-ceiled, dark wainscoted room, with sheaves of way-bills hung against the square pillars, and theatre notices flanking the bar window. As he turned to seek his rooms a hand gripped his arm and twitched him round, and he met the grinning face of a man in his old regiment, Bob Flixton, commonly called the Honourable Bob.

"So I've caught you, my lad," said he. "This is mighty fine. Veiled ladies, eh? Oh, fie! fie!"

Vaughan, innocent as he was, was a little put out. But he answered good-humouredly, "What brought you here, Flixton?"

"Ay, just so! Very unlucky, ain't it?" grinning. "Fear I'll cut you out, eh? You're a neat artist, I must say."

"I don't know the good lady from Eve!"

"Tell that to- But here, let me make you known to Brereton," hauling him towards a gentleman who was seated in one of the window recesses. "Old West Indian man, in charge of the recruiting district, and a good fellow, but a bit of a saint! Colonel," he rattled on, as they joined the gentleman, "here's Vaughan, once of ours, become a counsellor, and going to be Lord Chancellor. As to the veiled lady, mum, sir, mum!" with an exaggerated wink.

Vaughan laughed. It was impossible to resist Bob's impudent good-humour. He was a fair young man, short, stout, and inclining to baldness, with a loud, hearty voice, and a manner which made those who did not know him for a peer's son, think of a domestic fowl with a high opinion of itself. He was for ever damning this and praising that with unflagging decision; a man with whom it was impossible to be displeased, and in whom it was next to impossible not to believe. Yet at the mess-table it was whispered that he did not play his best when the pool was large; nor had he ever seen service, save in the lists of love, where his reputation stood high.

His companion, Vaughan saw, was of a different stamp. He was tall and lean, with the air and carriage of a soldier, but with features of a refined and melancholy cast, and with a brooding sadness in his eyes which could not escape the most casual observer. He was somewhat sallow, the result of the West Indian climate, and counted twenty years more than Flixton, for whom his gentle and quiet manner formed an admirable foil. He greeted Vaughan courteously, and the Honourable Bob forced our hero into a seat beside them.

"That's snug!" he said. "And now mum's the word, Vaughan. We'll not ask you what you're doing here among the nigger-nabobs. It's clear enough."

Vaughan explained that the veiled lady was a stranger who had come down in the coach with him, and that, for himself, it was election business which had brought him.

"Old Vermuyden?" returned the Honourable Bob. "To be sure! Man you've expectations from! Good old fellow, too. I know him. Go and see him one of these days. Gad, Colonel, if old Sir Robert heard your views he'd die on the spot! D-n the Bill, he'd say! And I say it too!"

"But afterwards?" Brereton returned, drawing Vaughan into the argument by a courteous gesture. "Consider the consequences, my dear fellow, if the Bill does not pass."

"Oh, hang the consequences!"

"You can't," drily. "You can hang men-we've been too fond of hanging them-but not consequences! Look at the state of the country; everywhere you will find excitement, and dangerous excitement. Cobbett's writings have roused the South; the papers are full of rioters and special commission to try them! Not a farmer can sleep for thinking of his stacks, nor a farmer's wife for thinking of her husband. Then for the North; look at Birmingham and Manchester and Glasgow, with their Political Unions preaching no taxation without representation. Or, nearer home, look at Bristol here, ready to drown the Corporation, and Wetherell in particular, in the Float! Then, if that is the state of things while they still expect the Bill to pass, what will be the position if they learn it is not to pass? No, no! You may shrug your shoulders, but the three days in Paris will be nothing to it."

"What I say is, shoot!" Flixton answered hotly. "Shoot! Shoot! Put 'em down! Put an end to it! Show 'em their places! What do a lot of d-d shopkeepers and peasants know about the Bill? Ride 'em down! Give 'em a taste of the Float themselves! I'll answer for it a troop of the 14th would soon bring the Bristol rabble to their senses!"

"I should be sorry to see it tried," Brereton answered, shaking his head. "They took that line in France last July, and you know the result. You'll agree with me, Mr. Vaughan, that where Marmont failed we are not likely to succeed. The more as his failure is known. The three days of July are known."

"Ay, by the Lord," the Honourable Bob cried. "The revolution in France bred the whole of this trouble!"

"The mob there won, and the mob here know it. In my opinion," Brereton continued, "conciliation is our only card, if we do not want to see a revolution."

"Hang your conciliation! Shoot, I say!"

"What do you think, Mr. Vaughan?"

"I think with you, Colonel Brereton," Vaughan answered, "that the only way to avoid such a crisis as has befallen France is to pass the Bill, and to set the Constitution on a wider basis by enlisting as large a number as possible in its defence."

"Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!" from Flixton.

"On the other hand," Vaughan continued, "I would put down the beginnings of disorder with a strong hand. I would allow no intimidation, no violence. The Bill should be passed by argument."

"Argument? Why, d-n me, intimidation is your argument!" the Honourable Bob struck in, with more acuteness than he commonly evinced. "Pass the Bill or we'll loose the dog! At 'em, Mob, good dog! At 'em! That's your argument!" triumphantly. "But I'll be back in a minute." And he left them.

Vaughan laughed. Brereton, however, seemed to be unable to take the matter lightly. "Do you really mean, Mr. Vaughan," he said, "that if there were trouble, here, for instance, you would not hesitate to give the order to fire?"

"Certainly, sir, if it could not be put down with the cold steel."

The Colonel shook his head despondently. "I don't think I could," he said. "I don't think I could. You have not seen war, and I have. And it is a fearful thing. Bad enough abroad, infinitely worse here. The first shot-think, Mr. Vaughan, of what it might be the beginning! What hundreds and thousands of lives might hang upon it! How many scores of innocent men shot down, of daughters made fatherless!" He shuddered. "And to give such an order on your own responsibility, when the

first volley might be the signal for a civil war, and twenty-four hours might see a dozen counties in a blaze! It is horrible to think of! Too horrible! It's too much for one man's shoulders! Flixton would do it—he sees no farther than his nose! But you and I, Mr. Vaughan—and on one's own judgment, which might be utterly, fatally wrong! My God, no!"

"Yet there must be a point," Vaughan replied, "at which such an order becomes necessary; becomes mercy!"

"Ay," Brereton answered eagerly; "but who is to say when that point is reached; and that peaceful methods can do no more? Or, granted that they can do no more, that provocation once given, your force is sufficient to prevent a massacre! A massacre in such a place as this!"

Vaughan saw that the idea had taken possession of the other's mind, and, aware that he had distinguished himself more than once on foreign service, he wondered. It was not his affair, however; and "Let us hope that the occasion may not arise," he said politely.

"God grant it!" Brereton replied. And then again, to himself and more fervently, "God grant it!" he muttered. The shadow lay darker on his face.

Vaughan might have wondered more, if Flixton had not returned at that moment and overwhelmed him with importunities to dine with him the next evening. "Gage and Congreve of the 14th are coming from Gloucester," he said, "and Codrington and two or three yeomanry chaps. You must come. If you don't, I'll quarrel with you and call you out! It'll do you good after the musty, fusty, goody-goody life you've been leading. Brereton's coming, and we'll drink King Billy till we're blind!"

Vaughan hesitated. He had taken his place on the coach, but—but after all there was that parcel. He must do something about it. It seemed to be his fate to be tempted, yet—what nonsense that was! Why should he not stay in Bristol if he pleased?

"You're very good," he said at last. "I'll stay."

Yet on his way to his room he paused, half-minded to go. But he was ashamed to change his mind again, and he strode on, opened his door, and saw the parcel, a neat little affair, laid on the table.

It bore in a clear handwriting the address which he had seen on the basket at Mary Smith's feet. But, possibly because an hour of the Honourable Bob's company had brushed the bloom from his fancy, it moved him little. He looked at it with something like indifference, felt no inclination to kiss it, and smiled at his past folly as he took it up and set off to return it to its owner. He had exaggerated the affair and his feelings; he had made much out of little, and a romance out of a chance encounter. He could smile now at that which had moved him yesterday. Certainly:

Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
The Court, camp, Church, the vessel and the mart,
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
Pride, fame, ambition to fill up his heart.

And the Honourable Bob, with his breezy self-assertion, had brought this home to him and, with a puff of everyday life, had blown the fantasy away.

He was still under this impression when he reached Queen's Square, once the pride of Bristol, and still, in 1831, a place handsome and well inhabited. Uniformly and substantially built, on a site surrounded on three sides by deep water, it lay, indeed, rather over-near the quays, of which, and of the basins, it enjoyed a view through several openings. But in the reign of William IV. merchants were less averse from living beside their work than they are now. The master's eye was still in repute, and though many of the richest citizens had migrated to Clifton, and the neighbouring Assembly Rooms in Prince's Street had been turned into a theatre, the spacious square, with its wide lawn, its lofty and umbrageous elms, its colony of rooks, and, last of all, its fine statue of the Glorious and Immortal Memory, was still the abode of many respectable people. In one corner stood the Mansion House;

a little further along the same side the Custom House; and a third public department, the Excise, also had offices here.

The Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace, on College Green, stood, as the crow flies, scarce a bow-shot from the Square; on which they looked down from the westward, as the heights of Redcliffe looked down on it from the east. But marsh as well as water divided the Square from these respectable neighbours; nor, it must be owned, was this the only drawback. The centre of the city's life, but isolated on three sides by water, the Square was as easily reached from the worse as from the better quarters, and owing to the proximity of the Welsh Back, a coasting quay frequented by the roughest class, it was liable in times of excitement to abrupt and boisterous inroads.

Vaughan entered the Square by Queen Charlotte Street, and had traversed one half of its width when his nonchalance failed him. Under the elms, in the corner which he was approaching, were a dozen children. They were at play, and overlooking them from a bench, with their backs to him, sat two young persons, the one in that mid-stage between childhood and womanhood when the eyes are at their sharpest and the waist at its thickest, the other, Mary Smith.

The colour rose to his brow, and to his surprise he found that he was not indifferent. Nor was the discovery that the back of her head and an inch of the nape of her neck had this effect upon him the worst. He had to ask himself what, if he was not indifferent, he was doing there, sneaking on the skirts of a ladies' school. What were his intentions, and what his aim? For to healthy minds there is something distasteful in the notion of an intrigue connected, ever so remotely, with a girls' school. Nor are conquests gained on that scene laurels of which even a Lothario is over-proud. If Flixton saw him, or some others of the gallant Fourteenth!

And yet, in the teeth of all this, and under the eyes of all Queen's Square, he must do his errand. And sheepish within, brazen without, he advanced and stood beside her. She heard his step, and, unsuspecting as the youngest of her flock, looked up to see who came-looking, and saw him standing within a yard of her, with the sunshine falling through the leaves on his wavy, fair hair. For the twentieth part of a second he fancied a glint of glad surprise in her eyes. Then, if anything could have punished him, it was the sight of her confusion; it was the blush of distress which covered her face as she rose to her feet.

Oh, cruel! He had pursued her, when to pursue was an insult! He had followed her when he should have known that in her position a breath of scandal was ruin! And oh, the round eyes of the round-faced child beside her!

"I must apologise," he murmured humbly, "but I am not trespassing upon you without a cause. I-I think that this is yours." And rather lamely, for the distress in her face troubled him, he held out the parcel.

She put her hand behind her, and as stiffly as Miss Sibson-of the Queen's Square Academy for Young Ladies of the Genteel and Professional Classes-could have desired. "I do not understand, sir," she said. She was pale and red by turns, as the round eyes saw.

"You left this in the coach."

"I beg your pardon?"

"You left this in the coach," he repeated, turning very red himself. Was it possible that she meant to repudiate her own property because he brought it? "It is yours, is it not?"

"No."

"It is not!" in incredulous astonishment.

"No."

"But I am sure it is," he persisted. Confound it, this was a little overdoing modesty! He had no desire to eat the girl! "You left it inside the coach, and it has your address upon it. See!" And he tried to place it in her hands.

But she drew back with a look of reprobation of which he would not have believed her eyes capable. "It is not mine, sir," she said. "Be good enough to leave us!" And then, drawing herself up, mild creature as she was, "You are intruding, sir," she said.

Now, if Vaughan had really been guilty of approaching her upon a feigned pretext, he had certainly retired on that with his tail between his legs. But being innocent, and both incredulous and angry, he stood his ground, and his eyes gave back some of the reproach which hers darted.

"I am either mad or it is yours," he said stubbornly, heedless of the ring of staring children who, ceasing to play, had gathered round them. "It bears your name and address, and it was left in the coach by which you travelled yesterday. I think, Miss Smith, you will be sorry afterwards if you do not take it."

She fancied that his words imported a bribe; and in despair of ridding herself of him, or in terror of the tale which the children would tell, she took her courage in both hands. "You say that it is mine?" she said, trembling visibly.

"Certainly I do," he answered. And again he held it out to her.

But she did not take it. Instead, "Then be good enough to follow me," she replied, with something of the prim dignity of the school-mistress. "Miss Cooke, will you collect the children and bring them into the house?"

And, avoiding his eyes, she led the way across the road to the door of one of the houses. He followed, but reluctantly, and after a moment of hesitation. He detested the scene which he now foresaw, and bitterly regretted that he had ever set foot inside Queen's Square. To be suspected of thrusting an intrigue upon a little schoolmistress, to be dragged, with a pack of staring, chattering children in his train, before some grim-faced duenna-he, a man of years and affairs, with whom the Chancellor of England did not scorn to speak on equal terms! It was hateful; it was an intolerable position. Yet to turn back, to say that he would not go, was to acknowledge himself guilty. He wished-he wished to heaven that he had never seen the girl. Or at least that he had had the courage, when she first denied the thing, to throw the parcel on the seat and go.

It was not an heroic frame of mind; but neither was the position heroic. And something may be forgiven him in the circumstances.

Fortunately the trial was short. She opened the door of the house, and on the threshold he found himself face to face with a tall, bulky woman, with a double chin, and an absurdly powdered nose, who wore a cameo of the late Queen Charlotte on her ample bosom. Miss Sibson had viewed the encounter from an upper window, and her face was a picture of displeasure, slightly tempered by powder.

"What is this?" she asked, in an intimidating voice. "Miss Smith, what is this, if you please?"

Perhaps Mary, aware that her place was at stake, was desperate. At any rate she behaved with a dignity which astonished Vaughan. "This gentleman, Madam," she explained, speaking with firmness though her face was on fire, "travelled with me on the coach yesterday. A few minutes ago he appeared and addressed me, and insisted that the-the parcel he carries is mine, and that I left it in the coach. It is not mine, and I have not seen it before."

Miss Sibson folded her arms upon her ample person. The position was not altogether new to her.

"Sir," she said, eying the offender majestically, "have you any explanation to offer-of this extraordinary conduct?"

He had, indeed. As clearly as his temper permitted he told his tale, his tone half ironical, half furious.

When he paused, "Who do you say gave it to you?" Miss Sibson asked in a deep voice.

"I do not know her name. A lady who travelled in the coach."

Miss Sibson's frown grew even deeper. "Thank you," she replied, "that will do. I have heard enough, and I understand. I understand, sir. Be good enough to leave the house."

"But, Madam-"

"Be good enough to leave the house," she repeated. "That is the door," pointing to it. "That is the door, sir! Any apology you may wish to make, you can make by letter to me. To me, you understand! I think one were not ill-fitting!"

He lost his temper altogether at that, and he flung the parcel with violence, and with a violent word, on a chair. "Then at any rate I shall not take that, for it's not mine!" he cried. "You may keep it, Madam!"

And he flung out, his retreat hampered and made humiliating by the entrance of the pupils, who, marshalled by the round-eyed one, and all round-eyed themselves, blocked the doorway at that unlucky moment. He broke through them without ceremony, though they represented the most respectable families in Bristol, and with his head bent he strode wrathfully across the Square.

To be turned out of a girls' boarding-school! To be shown the door like some wretched philandering schoolboy, or a subaltern in his first folly! He, the man of the world, of experience, of ambition! The man with a career! He was furious.

"The little cat!" he cried as he went. "I wish I had never seen her face! What a fool, what a fool I was to come!"

Unheroic words and an unheroic mood. But though there were heroes before Agamemnon, it is not certain that there were any after George the Fourth. At any rate, any who, like that great man, were heroic always and in all circumstances.

Probably Vaughan would have forgiven the little cat had he known that she was at that moment weeping very bitterly, with her face plunged into the pillow of her not over-luxurious bed. For she was young, and a woman. And because, in her position, the name of love was taboo; because to her the admiring look, which to a more fortunate sister was homage, was an insult; because the *petits soins*, the flower, the note, the trifle that to another were more precious than jewels, were not for her, it did not follow that she was not flesh and blood, that she had not feeling, affection, passion. True, the pang was soon deadened, for habit is strong. True, the bitter tears were soon dried, for employers like not gloomy looks. True, she soon cried shame on her own discontent, for she was good as gold. And yet to be debarred, in the tender springtime, from the sweet scents, the budding blooms, the gay carols, to have but one April coach-ride in a desert of days, is hard-is very hard. Mary Smith, weeping on her hopeless pillow-not without thought of the cruel arch stooping to crush her, the cruel fate from which he had snatched her, not without thought of her own ingratitude, her black ingratitude-felt that it was hard, very hard.

IX

THE BILL FOR GIVING EVERYBODYEVERYTHING!

It is difficult to describe and impossible to exaggerate the heat of public feeling which preceded the elections of '31. Four-fifths of the people of this country believed that the Bill-from which they expected so much that a satirist has aptly given it the title at the head of this chapter-had been defeated in the late House by a trick. That trick the King, God bless him, had punished by dissolving the House. It remained for the people to show their sense of the trick by returning a very different House; such a House as would not only pass the Bill, but pass it by a majority so decisive that the Lords, and particularly the Bench of Bishops, whose hostility was known, would not dare to oppose the public will.

But as no more than a small proportion of these four-fifths had votes, they were forced to act, if they would make their will obeyed, indirectly; in one place by the legitimate pressure of public opinion, in another by bribery, in a third by intimidation, in a fourth, and a fifth, and a sixth by open violence; everywhere by the unspoken threat of revolution. And hence arose the one good, sound, and firm argument against the Bill which the Tory party enjoyed.

One or two of their other arguments are not without interest, if only as the defence set up for a system so anomalous as to seem to us incredible-a system under which Gatton, with no inhabitants, returned two members, and Sheffield, with something like a hundred thousand inhabitants, returned none; under which Dunwich, long drowned under the North Sea, returned two members, and Birmingham returned none; under which the City of London returned four and Lord Lonsdale returned nine; under which Cornwall, with one-fourth of the population of Lancashire, returned thrice as many representatives; under which the South vastly outweighed the North, and land mightily outweighed all other property.

Moreover, in no two boroughs was the franchise the same. One man lived in a hovel and had a vote; his neighbour lived in a mansion and had no vote. Frequently the whole of the well-to-do townsfolk were voteless. Then, while any man with five thousand pounds might buy a seat, nor see the face of a single elector, on the other hand, the poll might be kept open for fifteen days, and a single county election might cost two hundred thousand pounds. Bribery, forbidden in theory, was permitted in practice. The very Government bribed under the rose, and it was humorously said that all that a man's constituents required was to be satisfied of the *impurity* of his intentions!

An anomalous system; yet its defenders had something to say for it.

First, that narrow as the franchise seemed, every class found somewhere in England its mouthpiece. At Preston, where all could vote who slept in the borough the previous night, the poorest class; in the potwalloping boroughs where a fireplace gave a vote, the next class; in a city like Westminster, the ratepayers; in the counties, the freeholders; in the universities, the clergy. And so on, the argument being that the very anomalies of the system provided a mixed representation without giving the masses a preponderant voice.

Secondly, they said that it insured a House of ability, by enabling young men of parts, but small means, to obtain seats. Those who put this forward flourished a long list of statesmen who had come in for nomination boroughs. It began with Pitt and ended with Macaulay-a feather plucked from the enemy's wing; and Burke stood for much in it. It became one of the commonplaces of the struggle.

The third contention was of greater weight. It was that, with all its abuses, the old system had worked well. This argument, too, had its commonplace. The proverb, *stare super antiquas vias*, was thundered from a thousand platforms, coupled with copious references to the French wars, and to the pilot who had weathered the storm. This was the argument of the old, and the rich, and the timid-

of those who clung to top-boots in the daytime and to pantaloons in the evening. But as the struggle progressed it came to be merged in the one sound argument to which reference has been made.

"If you do not pass the Bill," said the Whigs, "there will be a revolution."

"Possibly," the Tories rejoined. "And whom have we to thank for that? Who, using the French Revolution of last July as a fulcrum, have unsettled the whole country? And now, having disturbed everything, tell us that we must grant to force what is not due to reason? You! But if the Bill is to pass, not because it is a good Bill, but because the mob desire it, where will this end? Pass Bills out of fear, and where will you end? Presently there will arise a ranting adventurer, more violent than Brougham, a hoary schemer more unscrupulous than Grey, an angry boy, outscolding Durham, a pedant more bloodless than Lord John, an honest fanatic blinder than Althorp! And when *they* threaten *you* with the terrors of the mob, what will you say?"

To which the Whigs could only reply that the people must be trusted; and-and that the Bill must pass, or not only coronets but crowns would be flying.

Dry arguments nowadays; but in those days alive, and to the party on its defence-the party which found itself thrust against the wall, that its pockets might be emptied-of vital interest. From scores of platforms candidates, leaning forward, bland and smiling, with one hand under the coat-tails and the other gently pumping, pumping, pumping, enunciated them-old hands these; or, red in the face, thundered them, striking fist into palm and overawing opposition; or, hopeless amid the rain of dead cats and stale eggs, muttered them in a reporter's ear, since the hootings of the crowd made other utterance impossible. But ever as the contest went on, the smiling candidate grew rarer; for day by day the Tories, seeing their cause hopeless, seeing even Whigs, such as Sir Thomas Acland in Devonshire and Mr. Wilson Patten in Lancashire, cast out if they were lukewarm, grew more desperate, cried more loudly on high heaven, asserted more frantically that justice was dead on the earth. All this, while those who believed that the Bill was going to give everything to everybody pushed their advantage without mercy. Many a borough which had not known a contest for a generation, many a county, was fought and captured. No Tory felt safe; no bargain, though signed and sealed, held good; no patron, though he had held his income from his borough as secure as any part of his property, could say that his voters would dare to go to the poll.

This last was the apprehension in the mind of Isaac White, Sir Robert Vermuyden's agent, as on the day after Lady Lansdowne's visit he drove his gig and fast-trotting cob up the avenue. The treble front of the house looked down on him from its gentle eminence; its windows blinked in the afternoon sunshine, and the mellow tints of the stone harmonised with the russet bloom which in April garbs the poplar and the later-bursting trees. Tradition said that the second baronet had built a wing for each of his two sons. After the death of the elder, however, the east wing had been devoted to kitchens and offices, and the west to a splendid hospitality. In these days the latter wing was so seldom used that it had almost fallen into decay. Laurels grew up before the side windows and darkened them, and bats lived in the dry chimneys. The rooms above stairs were packed with the lumber of the last century, with the old wig-boxes, the old travelling-trunks, the old harpsichords, even an old sedan chair; while the lower rooms, swept and bare, and hung with flat, hard portraits, enjoyed an evil reputation in the servants' quarters, where many a one could tell of skirts that rustled unseen, and dead feet that trod the polished floors.

But to Isaac White all this was nought. He had seen the house in every aspect; and to-day his mind was filled with other things-with votes and voters, with some anxiety on his own account and more on his patron's. What would Sir Robert say if aught went wrong at Chippinge? True, the loss of the borough seemed barely possible; it had been held securely for many years. But the times were so stormy, public feeling ran so high, the mob was so rough, that nothing seemed impossible, in view of the stress to which the soundest candidates were exposed. If Mr. Bankes stood to fail in Dorset, if Mr. Duncombe had small chance in Yorkshire, if Sir Edward Knatchbull was a lost man in Kent,

if Mr. Hart Davies was no better in Bristol, if no man but an out-and-out Reformer could count on success, who was safe?

White's grandfather, his father, he himself had lived and thriven by the system which he saw tottering to its fall. He belonged to it, he was part of it; did he not mark his allegiance to it by wearing top-boots in the daytime and shorts in full dress? And he was prepared-were it only out of gratitude to the ladder by which he had risen-to stand by it and by his patron to the last. But, strange anomaly, White was at heart a Cobbett man. His sneaking sympathies were, in his own despite, with the class from which he sprang. He saw commons filched from the poor, while the labourers fell on the rates. He saw large taxes wrung from the country to be spent in the town. He saw the severity of the laws, and especially the game laws. He saw absentee rectors and starving curates. He saw the dumb impotence of nine-tenths of the people; and he felt that the system under which these things had grown up was wrong. But wrong or right, he was part of it, he was pledged to it; and all the theories in the world, and all the "Political Registers" which he digested of an evening, would not induce him to betray it.

Notwithstanding, he feared that in the matter of the borough he had not been quite so wide-awake as became him; or Pybus, the Bowood man, would not have stolen a march upon him. His misgivings grew as he came in sight of the door, and saw Sir Robert on the flight of steps which led to it. Apparently the baronet had seen him, for as White drove up a servant appeared to lead the mare to the stables.

Sir Robert looked her over as she was led away. "The grey looks well, White," he said. She was of his breeding.

"Yes, Sir Robert. Give me a good horse and they may have the new-fangled railroads that like them. But I am afraid, sir-"

"One moment!" The servant was out of hearing, and the baronet's tone, as he caught White up, betrayed agitation. "Who is that looking over the Lower Wicket, White?" he continued. "She has been there a quarter of an hour, and-and I can't make her out."

His tone surprised White, who looked and saw at a distance of a hundred paces the figure of a woman leaning on the wicket-gate nearest the stables. She was motionless, and he had not looked many seconds before he caught the thought in Sir Robert's mind. "He's heard," he reflected, "that her ladyship is in the neighbourhood, and it has alarmed him."

"I cannot see at this distance, sir," he answered prudently, "who it is."

"Then go and ask her her business," Sir Robert said, as indifferently as he could. "She has been there a long time."

White went, a little excited himself; but half-way to the woman, who continued to gaze at the house as if unconscious of his approach, he discovered that, whoever she was, she was not Lady Sybil. She was stout, middle-aged, plain; and he took a curt tone with her when he came within earshot. "What are you doing here?" he said. "That's the way to the servants' hall."

The woman looked at him. "You don't know me, Mr. White?" she said.

He looked hard in return. "No," he answered bluntly, "I don't."

"Ah, well, I know you," she replied. "More by token-"

He cut her short. "Have you any message?" he asked.

"If I have, I'll give it myself," she retorted drily. "Truth is, I'm in two minds about it. What you have, you have, d'you see, Mr. White; but what you've given ain't yours any more. Anyway-"

"Anyway," impatiently, "you can't stay here!"

"Very good," she replied, "very good. As you are so kind, I'll take a day to think of it." And with a cool nod she turned her back on the puzzled White, and went off down the park towards the town.

He went back to Sir Robert. "She's a stranger, sir," he said; "and, I think, a bit gone in the head. I could make nothing of her."

Sir Robert drew a deep breath. "You're sure she was a stranger?" he said.

"She's no one I know, sir. After one of the men, perhaps."

Sir Robert straightened himself. He had spent a bad ten minutes gazing at the distant figure. "Just so," he said. "Very likely. And now what is it, White?"

"I've bad news, sir, I'm afraid," the agent said, in an altered tone.

"What is it?"

"It's that d-d Pybus, sir! I'm afraid that, after all-"

"They're going to fight?"

"I'm afraid, Sir Robert, they are."

The old gentleman's eyes gleamed. "Afraid, sir, afraid?" he cried. "On the contrary, so much the better. It will cost me some money, but I can spare it; and it will cost them more, and nothing for it. Afraid? I don't understand you."

The agent, standing on the step below him, coughed dubiously. "Well, sir," he said, "what you say is reasonable. But-"

"But! But what?"

"There is so much excitement in the country at this time-"

"So much greediness in the country," Sir Robert retorted, striking his stick upon the stone steps. "So much unscrupulousness, sir; so many liars promising, and so many fools listening; so much to get, and so many who would like it! There's all that, if you please; but for excitement, I don't know" – with a severe look – "what you mean, or what it has to do with us."

"I am afraid, sir, there is bad news from Devon, where it is said our candidate is retiring."

"A good man, but weak; neither one side nor the other."

"And from Dorset, sir, where they say Mr. Bankes will be beaten."

"I'll not believe it," Sir Robert answered positively. "I'll never believe it. Mr. Bankes beaten in Dorset! Absurd! Why do you listen to such tales? Why do you listen? By G-d, White, what is the matter with you? Or how does it touch us if Mr. Bankes is beaten? Nine votes to four! Nine will still be nine, and four four, if he be beaten. When you can make four to be more than nine you may come whining to me!"

White coughed. "Dyas, the butcher-"

"What of him?"

"Well, Sir Robert, I am afraid he has been getting some queer notions."

"Notions?" the baronet echoed in astonishment.

"He has been listening to someone, and-and thinks he has views on the Bill."

Sir Robert exploded. "Views!" he cried. "Views! The butcher with views! Why, damme, White, you must be mad! Mad! Since when have butchers taken to politics, or had views?"

"I don't know anything about that, sir," White mumbled.

Sir Robert struck his stick fiercely on a step. "But I do! I do! And I know this," he continued, "that for twenty years he's had thirty pounds a year to vote as I tell him. By gad, I never heard such a thing in my life! Never! You don't mean to tell me that the man thinks the vote's his own to do what he likes with?"

"I am afraid," the agent admitted reluctantly, "that that is what he's saying, sir."

Sir Robert's thin face turned a dull red. "I never heard of such impudence in all my life," he said, "never! A butcher with views! And going to vote for them! Why, damme," he continued, with angry sarcasm, "we'll have the tailors, the bakers, and the candlestickmakers voting their own way next. Good G-d! What does the man think he's had thirty pounds a year for for all these years, if not to do as he is bid?"

"He's behaving very ill, sir," White said, severely, "very ill."

"Ill!" Sir Robert cried; "I should think he was, the scoundrel!" And he foamed over afresh, though we need not follow him. When he had cooled somewhat, "Well," he said, "I can turn him out, and that I'll do, neck and crop! By G-d, I will! I'll ruin him. But there, it's the big rats set the fashion and the little ones follow it. This is Spinning Jenny's work. I wish I had cut off my hand before

I voted for him. Well, well, well!" And he stood a moment in bitter contemplation of Sir Robert Peel's depravity. It was nothing that Sir Robert was sound on reform. By adopting the Catholic side on the claims he-he, whose very nickname was Orange Peel-had rent the party. And all these evils were the result!

The agent coughed.

Sir Robert, who was no fool, looked sharply at him. "What!" he said grimly. "Not another renegade?"

"No, sir," White answered timidly. "But Thrush, the pig-killer-he's one of the old lot, the Cripples, that your father put into the corporation-

"Ay, and I wish I had kept them cripples." Sir Robert growled. "All cripples! My father was right, and I was a fool to think better men would do as well, and do us credit. In his time there were but two of the thirteen could read and write; but they did as they were bid. They did as they were bid. And now-well, man, what of Thrush?"

"He was gaoled yesterday by Mr. Forward, of Steynsham, for assault."

"For how long?"

"For a fortnight, sir."

Sir Robert nearly had a fit. He reared himself to his full height, and glared at White. "The infernal rascal!" he cried. "He did it on purpose!"

"I've no doubt, sir, that it determined them to fight," the agent answered. "With Dyas they are five. And five to seven is not such-such odds that they may not have some hope of winning."

"Five to seven!" Sir Robert repeated; and at an end of words, at an end of oaths, could only stare aghast. "Five to seven!" he muttered. "You're not going to tell me-there's something more."

"No, sir, no; that's the worst," White answered, relieved that his tale was told. "That's the worst, and may be bettered. I've thought it well to postpone the nomination until Wednesday the 4th, to give Sergeant Wathen a better chance of dealing with Dyas."

"Well, well!" Sir Robert muttered. "It has come to that. It has come to dealing with such men as butchers, to treating them as if they had minds to alter and views to change. Well, well!"

And that was all Sir Robert could say. And so it was settled; the Vermuyden dinner for the 2nd, the nomination and polling for the 4th. "You'll let Mr. Vaughan know," Sir Robert concluded. "It's well we can count on somebody."

X

THE QUEEN'S SQUARE ACADEMY FOR YOUNG LADIES

Miss Sibson sat in state in her parlour in Queen's Square. Rather more dignified of mien than usual, and more highly powdered of nose, the schoolmistress was dividing her attention between the culprit in the corner, the elms outside-between which fledgeling rooks were making adventurous voyages-and the longcloth which she was preparing for the young ladies' plain-sewing; for in those days plain-sewing was still taught in the most select academies. Nor, while she was thus engaged in providing for the domestic training of her charges, was she without assurance that their minds were under care. The double doors which separated the schoolroom from the parlour were ajar, and through the aperture one shrill voice after another could be heard, raised in monotonous perusal of Mrs. Chapone's "Letters to a Young Lady upon the Improvement of the Mind."

Miss Sibson wore her best dress, of black silk, secured half-way down the bodice by the large cameo brooch. But neither this nor the reading in the next room could divert her attention from her duties.

"The tongue," she enunciated with great clearness, as she raised the longcloth in both hands and carefully inspected it over her glasses, "is an unruly member. Ill-nature," she continued, slowly meting off a portion, and measuring a second portion against it, "is the fruit of a bad heart. Our opinions of others" – this with a stern look at Miss Hilhouse, fourteen years old, and in disgrace-"are the reflections of ourselves."

The young lady, who was paying with the backboard for a too ready wit, put out the unruly member, and, narrowly escaping detection, looked inconceivably sullen.

"The face is the mirror to the mind," Miss Sibson continued thoughtfully, as she threaded a needle against the light. "I hope, Miss Hilhouse, that you are now sorry for your fault."

Miss Hilhouse maintained a stolid silence. Her shoulders ached, but she was proud.

"Very good," said Miss Sibson placidly; "very good! With time comes reflection."

Time, a mere minute, brought more than reflection. A gentleman walked quickly across the fore-court to the door, the knocker fell sharply, and Miss Hilhouse's sullenness dropped from her. She looked first uncomfortable, then alarmed. "Please, may I go now?" she muttered.

Wise Miss Sibson paid no heed. "A gentleman?" she said to the maid who had entered. "Will I see him? Procure his name."

"Oh, Miss Sibson," came from the corner in an agonised whisper, "please may I go?" Fourteen standing on a stool with a backboard could not bear to be seen by the other sex.

Miss Sibson looked grave. "Are you sincerely sorry for your fault?" she asked.

"Yes."

"And will you apologise to Miss Smith for your-your gross rudeness?"

"Ye-es."

"Then go and do so," Miss Sibson replied; "and close the doors after you."

The girl fled. And simultaneously Miss Sibson rose, with a mixture of dignity and blandness, to receive Arthur Vaughan. The schoolmistress of that day who had not manner at command had nothing; for deportment ranked among the essentials. And she was quite at her case. The same could not be said of the gentleman. But that his pride still smarted, but that the outrage of yesterday was fresh, but that he drew a savage satisfaction from the prospect of the apologies he was here to receive, he had not come. Even so, he had told himself more than once that he was a fool to come; a fool to set foot in the house. He was almost sure that he had done more wisely had he burned the letter in which the schoolmistress informed him that she had an explanation to offer-and so had made an end.

But if in place of meeting him with humble apologies, this confounded woman were going to bear herself as if no amends were due, he had indeed made a mistake.

Yet her manner said almost as much as that. "Pray be seated, sir," she said; and she indicated a chair.

He sat down stiffly, and glowered at her. "I received your note," he said.

She smoothed her ample lap, and looked at him more graciously. "Yes," she said, "I was relieved to find that the unfortunate occurrence of yesterday was open to another explanation."

"I have yet," he said curtly, "to hear the explanation." Confound the woman's impudence!

"Exactly," she said slowly. "Exactly. Well, it turns out that the parcel you left behind you when you" – for an instant a smile broke the rubicund placidity of her face – "when you retired so hurriedly contained a pelisse."

"Indeed?" he said drily.

"Yes; and a letter."

"Oh?"

"Yes; a letter from a lady who has for some years taken an interest in Miss Smith. The pelisse proved to be a gift from her."

"Then I fail to see –"

"Exactly," Miss Sibson interposed blandly, indeed too blandly. "You fail to see why you came to be selected as the bearer? So do I. Perhaps you can explain that."

"No," he answered shortly. "Nor is that my affair. What I fail to see, Madam, is why Miss Smith did not at once suspect that the present came from the lady in question."

"Because," Miss Sibson replied, "the lady was not known to be in this part of England; and because you, sir, maintained that Miss Smith had left the parcel in the coach."

"I maintained what I was told."

"But it was not the fact. However, let that pass."

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