Cooper James Fenimore

The Redskins: or, Indian and Injin. Volume 1

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Содержание

James Fenimore Cooper
The Redskins; or, Indian and Injin, Volume 1. Being the Conclusion of the Littlepage Manuscripts

PREFACE

This book closes the series of the Littlepage Manuscripts, which have been given to the world, as containing a fair account of the comparative sacrifices of time, money and labour, made respectively by the landlord and the tenants, on a New York estate; together with the manner in which usages and opinions are changing among us; as well as certain of the reasons of these changes. The discriminating reader will probably be able to trace in these narratives the progress of those innovations on the great laws of morals which are becoming so very manifest in connection with this interest, setting at naught the plainest principles that God has transmitted to man for the government of his conduct, and all under the extraordinary pretence of favouring liberty! In this downward course, our picture embraces some of the proofs of that looseness of views on the subject of certain species of property which is, in a degree perhaps, inseparable from the semi-barbarous condition of a new settlement; the gradation of the squatter, from him who merely makes his pitch to crop a few fields in passing, to him who carries on the business by wholesale; and last, though not least in this catalogue of marauders, the anti-renter.

It would be idle to deny that the great principle which lies at the bottom of anti-rentism, if principle it can be called, is the assumption of a claim that the interests and wishes of numbers are to be respected, though done at a sacrifice of the clearest rights of the few. That this is not liberty, but tyranny in its worst form, every right-thinking and right-feeling man must be fully aware. Every one who knows much of the history of the past, and of the influence of classes, must understand, that whenever the educated, the affluent and the practised, choose to unite their means of combination and money to control the political destiny of a country, they become irresistible; making the most subservient tools of those very masses who vainly imagine *they* are the true guardians of their own liberties. The well-known election of 1840 is a memorable instance of the power of such a combination; though that was a combination formed mostly for the mere purposes of faction, sustained perhaps by the desperate designs of the insolvents of the country. Such a combination was necessarily wanting in union among the affluent; it had not the high support of principles to give it sanctity, and it affords little more than the proof of the power of money and leisure, when applied in a very doubtful cause, in wielding the masses of a great nation, to be the instruments of their own subjection. No well-intentioned American legislator, consequently, ought ever to lose sight of the fact, that each invasion of the right which he sanctions is a blow struck against liberty itself, which, in a country like this, has no auxiliary so certain or so powerful as justice.

The State of New York contains about 43,000 square miles of land; or something like 27,000,000 of acres. In 1783, its population must have been about 200,000 souls. With such a proportion between people and surface it is unnecessary to prove that the husbandman was not quite as dependent on the landholder, as the landholder was dependent on the husbandman. This would have been true, had the State been an island; but we all know it was surrounded by many other communities similarly situated, and that nothing else was so abundant as land. All notions of exactions and monopolies, therefore, must be untrue, as applied to those two interests at that day.

In 1786-7, the State of New York, then in possession of all powers on the subject, abolished entails, and otherwise brought its law of real estate in harmony with the institutions. At that time, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of the leases which have since become so obnoxious, were in existence. With the attention of the State drawn directly to the main subject, no one saw anything incompatible with the institutions in them. *It was felt that the landlords had bought the tenants to occupy their lands by the liberality of their concessions*, and that the latter were the obliged parties. Had the landlords of that day endeavoured to lease for one year, or for ten years, no tenants could have been found for wild lands; but it became a different thing, when the owner of the soil agreed to part with it for ever, in consideration of a very low rent, granting six or eight years free from any charge whatever, and consenting to receive the product of the soil itself in lieu of money. Then, indeed, men were not only willing to come into the terms, but eager; the best evidence of which is the fact, that the same tenants might have bought land, out and out, in every direction around them, had they not preferred the easier terms of the leases. Now, that these same men, or their successors, have become rich enough to care more to be rid of the encumbrance of the rent than to keep their money, the rights of the parties certainly are not altered.

In 1789, the Constitution of the United States went into operation; New York being a party to its creation and conditions. By that Constitution, the State deliberately deprived itself of the power to touch the covenants of these leases, without conceding the power to any other government; unless it might be through a change of the Constitution itself. As a necessary consequence, these leases, in a legal sense, belong to the institutions of New York, instead of being opposed to them. Not only is the spirit of the institutions in harmony with these leases, but so is the letter also. Men must draw a distinction between the "spirit of the institutions" and their own "spirits;" the latter being often nothing more than a stomach that is not easily satisfied. It would be just as true to affirm that domestic slavery is opposed to the institutions of the United States, as to say the same of these leases. It would be just as rational to maintain, because A. does not choose to make an associate of B., that he is acting in opposition to the "spirit of the institutions," inasmuch as the Declaration of Independence advances the dogmas that men are born equal, as it is to say it is opposed to the same spirit, for B. to pay rent to A. according to his covenant.

It is pretended that the durable leases are feudal in their nature. We do not conceive this to be true; but, admitting it to be so, it would only prove that feudality, to this extent, is a part of the institutions of the State. What is more, it would become a part over which the State itself has conceded all power of control, beyond that which it may remotely possess as one, out of twenty-eight communities. As respects this feudal feature, it is not easy to say where it must be looked for. It is not to be found in the simple fact of paying rent, for that is so general as to render the whole country feudal, could it be true; it cannot be in the circumstance that the rent is to be paid "in kind," as it is called, and in labour, for that is an advantage to the tenant, by affording him the option, since the penalty of a failure leaves the alternative of paying in money. It must be, therefore, that these leases are feudal because they run for ever! Now the length of the lease is clearly a concession to the tenant, and was so regarded when received; and there is not probably a single tenant, under lives, who would not gladly exchange his term of possession for that of one of these detestable durable leases!

Among the absurdities that have been circulated on this subject of feudality, it has been pretended that the well-known English statute of "*quia emptores*" has prohibited fines for alienation; or that the quarter-sales, fifth-sales, sixth-sales, &c. of our own leases were contrary to the law of the realm, when made. Under the common law, in certain cases of feudal tenures, the fines for alienation were an incident of the tenure. The statute of *quia emptores* abolished that general principle, but it in no manner forbade parties *to enter into covenants of the nature of quarter-sales*, did they see fit. The common law gives all the real estate to the eldest son. Our statute divides the real estate among the nearest of kin, without regard even to sex. It might just as well be pretended that the father cannot devise all his lands to his eldest son, under our statute, as to say that the law of Edward I. prevents

parties from *bargaining* for quarter-sales. Altering a provision of the common law does not preclude parties from making covenants similar to its ancient provisions.

Feudal tenures were originally divided into two great classes; those which were called the military tenures, or knight's service, and *soccage*. The first tenure was that which became oppressive in the progress of society. Soccage was of two kinds; free and villian. The first has an affinity to our own system, as connected with these leases; the last never existed among us at all. When the knight's service, or military tenures of England were converted into free soccage, in the reign of Charles II., the concession was considered of a character so favourable to liberty as to be classed among the great measures of the time; one of which was the *habeas corpus* act!

The only feature of our own leases, in the least approaching "villian soccage," is that of the "day's works." But every one acquainted with the habits of American life, will understand that husbandmen, in general, throughout the northern States, would regard it as an advantage to be able to pay their debts in this way; and the law gives them an option, since a failure to pay "in kind," or "in work," merely incurs the forfeiture of paying what the particular thing is worth, in money. In point of fact, money has always been received for these "day's works," and at a stipulated price.

But, it is pretended, whatever may be the equity of these leasehold contracts, they are offensive to the tenants, and ought to be abrogated, for the peace of the State. The State is bound to make all classes of men respect its laws, and in nothing more so than in the fulfilment of their legal contracts. The greater the number of the offenders, the higher the obligation to act with decision and efficiency. To say that these disorganizers *ought* not to be put down, is to say that crime is to obtain impunity by its own extent; and to say that they *cannot* be put down "under our form of government," is a direct admission that the government is unequal to the discharge of one of the plainest and commonest obligations of all civilized society. If this be really so, the sooner we get rid of the present form of government the better. The notion of remedying *such* an evil by concession, is as puerile as it is dishonest. The larger the concessions become, the greater will be the exactions of a cormorant cupidity. As soon as quiet is obtained by these means, in reference to the leasehold tenures, it will be demanded by some fresh combination to attain some other end.

When Lee told Washington, at Monmouth, "Sir, your troops will not stand against British grenadiers," Washington is said to have answered, "Sir, you have never tried them." The same reply might be given to those miserable traducers of this republic, who, in order to obtain votes, affect to think there is not sufficient energy in its government to put down so bare-faced an attempt as this of the anti-renters to alter the conditions of their own leases to suit their own convenience. The county of Delaware has, of itself, nobly given the lie to the assertion, the honest portion of its inhabitants scattering the knaves to the four winds, the moment there was a fair occasion made for them to act. A single, energetic proclamation from Albany, calling a "spade a spade," and not affecting to gloss over the disguised robbery of these anti-renters, and laying just principles fairly before the public mind, would of itself have crushed the evil in its germ. The people of New York, in their general capacity, are not the knaves their servants evidently suppose.

The assembly of New York, in its memorable session of 1846, has taxed the rents on long leases; thus, not only taxing the same property twice, but imposing the worst sort of income-tax, or one aimed at a few individuals. It has "thimble-rigged" in its legislation, as Mr. Hugh Littlepage not unaptly terms it; endeavouring to do that indirectly, which the Constitution will not permit it to do directly. In other words, as it can pass no direct law "impairing the obligation of contracts," while it *can* regulate descents, it has enacted, so far as one body of the legislature has power to enact anything, that on the *death* of a landlord the tenant may convert his lease into a mortgage, on discharging which he shall hold his land in fee!

We deem the first of these measures far more tyrannical than the attempt of Great Britain to tax her colonies, which brought about the revolution. It is of the same general character, that of unjust taxation; while it is attended by circumstances of aggravation that were altogether wanting in the

policy of the mother country. This is not a tax for revenue, which is not needed; but a tax to "choke off" the landlords, to use a common American phrase. It is clearly taxing *nothing*, or it is taxing the same property twice. It is done to conciliate three or four thousand voters, who are now in the market, at the expense of three or four hundred who, it is known, are not to be bought. It is unjust in its motives, its means and its end. The measure is discreditable to civilization, and an outrage on liberty.

But, the other law mentioned is an atrocity so grave, as to alarm every man of common principle in the State, were it not so feeble in its devices to cheat the Constitution, as to excite contempt. This extraordinary power is exercised because the legislature *can* control the law of descents, though it cannot "impair the obligation of contracts!" Had the law said at once that on the death of a landlord each of his tenants should *own* his farm in fee, the ensemble of the fraud would have been preserved, since the "law of descents" would have been so far regulated as to substitute one heir for another; but changing the *nature* of a contract, with a party who has nothing to do with the succession at all, is not so very clearly altering, or amending, the law of descents! It is scarcely necessary to say that every reputable court in the country, whether State or Federal, would brand such a law with the disgrace it merits.

But the worst feature of this law, or attempted law, remains to be noticed. It would have been a premium on murder. Murder *has* already been committed by these anti-renters, and that obviously to effect their ends; and they were to be told that whenever you shoot a landlord, as some have already often shot *at* them, you can convert your leasehold tenures into tenures in fee! The mode of valuation is so obvious, too, as to deserve a remark. A master was to settle the valuation on testimony. The witnesses of course would be "the neighbours," and a whole patent could swear for each other!

As democrats we protest most solemnly against such bare-faced frauds, such palpable cupidity and covetousness being termed anything but what they are. If they come of any party at all, it is the party of the devil. Democracy is a lofty and noble sentiment. It does not rob the poor to make the rich richer, nor the rich to favour the poor. It is just, and treats all men alike. It does not "impair the obligations of contracts." It is not the friend of a canting legislation, but, meaning right, dare act directly. There is no greater delusion than to suppose that true democracy has anything in common with injustice or roguery.

Nor is it an apology for anti-rentism, in any of its aspects, to say that leasehold tenures are inexpedient. The most expedient thing in existence is to do right. Were there no other objection to this anti-rent movement than its corrupting influence, that alone should set every wise man in the community firmly against it. We have seen too much of this earth, to be so easily convinced that there is any disadvantage, nay that there is not a positive advantage in the existence of large leasehold estates, when they carry with them no political power, as is the fact here. The common-place argument against them, that they defeat the civilization of a country, is not sustained by fact. The most civilized countries on earth are under this system; and this system, too, not entirely free from grave objections which do not exist among ourselves. That a poorer class of citizens have originally leased than have purchased lands in New York, is probably true; and it is equally probable that the effects of this poverty, and even of the tenure in the infancy of a country, are to be traced on the estates. But this is taking a very one-sided view of the matter. The men who became tenants in moderate but comfortable circumstances, would have been mostly labourers on the farms of others, but for these leasehold tenures. That is the benefit of the system in a new country, and the ultra friend of humanity, who decries the condition of a tenant, should remember that if he had not been in this very condition, he might have been in a worse. It is, indeed, one of the proofs of the insincerity of those who are decrying leases, on account of their aristocratic tendencies, that their destruction will necessarily condemn a numerous class of agriculturists, either to fall back into the ranks of the peasant or day-labourer, or to migrate, as is the case with so many of the same class in New England. In point of fact, the relation of landlord and tenant is one entirely natural and salutary, in a wealthy community, and one that is so much in accordance with the necessities of men, that no legislation can long prevent

it. A state of things which will not encourage the rich to hold real estate would not be desirable, since it would be diverting their money, knowledge, liberality, feelings and leisure, from the improvement of the soil, to objects neither so useful nor so praiseworthy.

The notion that every husbandman is to be a freeholder, is as Utopian in practice, as it would be to expect that all men were to be on the same level in fortune, condition, education and habits. As such a state of things as the last never yet did exist, it was probably never designed by divine wisdom that it should exist. The whole structure of society must be changed, even in this country, ere it could exist among ourselves, and the change would not have been made a month before the utter impracticability of such a social fusion would make itself felt by all.

We have elsewhere imputed much of the anti-rent feeling to provincial education and habits. This term has given the deepest offence to those who were most obnoxious to the charge. Nevertheless, our opinion is unchanged. We know that the distance between the cataract of Niagara and the Massachusetts line is a large hundred leagues, and that it is as great between Sandy Hook and the 45th parallel of latitude. Many excellent things, moral and physical, are to be found within these limits, beyond a question; but we happen to know by an experience that has extended to other quarters of the world, for a term now exceeding forty years, that more are to be found beyond them. If "honourable gentlemen" at Albany fancy the reverse, they must still permit us to believe they are too much under the influence of provincial notions.

CHAPTER I

"Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and
She said – Thou wert my daughter; and thy father
Was duke of Milan; and his only heir
A princess; – no worse issued."

Tempest.

My uncle Ro and myself had been travelling together in the East, and had been absent from home fully five years, when we reached Paris. For eighteen months neither of us had seen a line from America, when we drove through the barriers, on our way from Egypt, viâ Algiers, Marseilles, and Lyons. Not once, in all that time, had we crossed our own track, in a way to enable us to pick up a straggling letter; and all our previous precautions to have the epistles meet us at different bankers in Italy, Turkey, and Malta, were thrown away.

My uncle was an old traveller – I might almost say, an old resident – in Europe; for he had passed no less than twenty years of his fifty-nine off the American continent. A bachelor, with nothing to do but to take care of a very ample estate, which was rapidly increasing in value by the enormous growth of the town of New York, and with tastes early formed by travelling, it was natural he should seek those regions where he most enjoyed himself. Hugh Roger Littlepage was born in 1786 – the second son of my grandfather, Mordaunt Littlepage, and of Ursula Malbone, his wife. My own father, Malbone Littlepage, was the eldest child of that connexion; and he would have inherited the property of Ravensnest, in virtue of his birthright, had he survived his own parents; but, dying young, I stepped into what would otherwise have been his succession, in my eighteenth year. My uncle Ro, however, had got both Satanstoe and Lilacsbush; two country-houses and farms, which, while they did not aspire to the dignity of being estates, were likely to prove more valuable, in the long run, than the broad acres which were intended for the patrimony of the elder brother. My grandfather was affluent; for not only had the fortune of the Littlepages centred in him, but so did that of the Mordaunts, the wealthier family of the two, together with some exceedingly liberal bequests from a certain Col. Dirck Follock, or Van Valkenburgh; who, though only a very distant connexion, chose to make my great-grandmother's, or Anneke Mordaunt's, descendants his heirs. We all had enough; my aunts having handsome legacies, in the way of bonds and mortgages, on an estate called Mooseridge, in addition to some lots in town; while my own sister, Martha, had a clear fifty thousand dollars in money. I had town-lots, also, which were becoming productive; and a special minority of seven years had made an accumulation of cash that was well vested in New York State stock, and which promised well for the future. I say a "special" minority; for both my father and grandfather, in placing, the one, myself and a portion of the property, and the other the remainder of my estate, under the guardianship and ward of my uncle, had made a provision that I was not to come into possession until I had completed my twenty-fifth year.

I left college at twenty; and my uncle Ro, for so Martha and myself always called him, and so he was always called by some twenty cousins, the offspring of our three aunts; – but my uncle Ro, when I was done with college, proposed to finish my education by travelling. As this was only too agreeable to a young man, away we went, just after the pressure of the great panic of 1836-7 was over, and our "lots" were in tolerable security, and our stocks safe. In America it requires almost as much vigilance to *take care* of property, as it does industry to acquire it.

Mr. Hugh Roger Littlepage – by the way, I bore the same name, though I was always called Hugh, while my uncle went by the different appellations of Roger, Ro, and Hodge, among his familiars, as circumstances had rendered the associations sentimental, affectionate, or manly – Mr.

Hugh Roger Littlepage, Senior, then, had a system of his own, in the way of aiding the scales to fall from American eyes, by means of seeing more clearly than one does, or can, at home, let him belong where he may, and in clearing the specks of provincialism from off the diamond of republican water. He had already seen enough to ascertain that while "our country," as this blessed nation is very apt on all occasions, appropriate or not, to be called by all who belong to it, as well as by a good many who do not, could teach a great deal to the old world, there was a possibility – just a *possibility*, remark, is my word – that it might also learn a little. With a view, therefore, of acquiring knowledge seriatim, as it might be, he was for beginning with the hornbook, and going on regularly up to the belles-lettres and mathematics. The manner in which this was effected deserves a notice.

Most American travellers land in England, the country farthest advanced in material civilization; then proceed to Italy, and perhaps to Greece, leaving Germany, and the less attractive regions of the north, to come in at the end of the chapter. My uncle's theory was to follow the order of time, and to begin with the ancients and end with the moderns; though, in adopting such a rule, he admitted he somewhat lessened the pleasure of the novice; since an American, fresh from the fresher fields of the western continent, might very well find delight in memorials of the past, more especially in England, which pall on his taste, and appear insignificant, after he has become familiar with the Temple of Neptune, the Parthenon, or what is left of it, and the Coliseum. I make no doubt that I lost a great deal of passing happiness in this way, by beginning at the beginning, or by beginning in Italy, and travelling north.

Such was our course, however; and, landing at Leghorn, we did the peninsula effectually in a twelvemonth; thence passed through Spain up to Paris, and proceeded on to Moscow and the Baltic, reaching England from Hamburg. When we had got through with the British isles, the antiquities of which seemed flat and uninteresting to me, after having seen those that were so much more *antique*, we returned to Paris, in order that I might become a man of the world, if possible, by rubbing off the provincial specks that had unavoidably adhered to the American diamond while in its obscurity.

My uncle Ro was fond of Paris, and he had actually become the owner of a small hotel in the faubourg, in which he retained a handsome furnished apartment for his own use. The remainder of the house was let to permanent tenants; but the whole of the first floor, and of the *entresol*, remained in his hands. As a special favour, he would allow some American family to occupy even his own apartment – or rather *appartement*, for the words are not exactly synonymous – when he intended to be absent for a term exceeding six months, using the money thus obtained in keeping the furniture in repair, and his handsome suite of rooms, including a *salon*, *salle à manger*, *ante-chambre*, *cabinet*, several *chambres à coucher*, and a *boudoir*– yes, a male *boudoir*! for so he affected to call it – in a condition to please even his fastidiousness.

On our arrival from England, we remained an entire season at Paris, all that time rubbing the specks off the diamond, when my uncle suddenly took it into his head that we ought to see the East. He had never been further than Greece, himself; and he now took a fancy to be my companion in such an excursion. We were gone two years and a half, visiting Greece, Constantinople, Asia Minor, the Holy Land, Petra, the Red Sea, Egypt quite to the second cataracts, and nearly the whole of Barbary. The latter region we threw in, by way of seeing something out of the common track. But so many hats and travelling-caps are to be met with, now-a-days, among the turbans, that a well-mannered Christian may get along almost anywhere without being spit upon. This is a great inducement for travelling generally, and ought to be so especially to an American, who, on the whole, incurs rather more risk now of suffering this humiliation at home, than he would even in Algiers. But the animus is everything in morals.

We had, then, been absent two years and a half from Paris, and had not seen a paper or received a letter from America in eighteen months, when we drove through the barrier. Even the letters and papers received or seen previously to this last term, were of a private nature, and contained nothing of a general character. The "twenty millions" – it was only the other day they were called the "twelve

millions" – but, the "twenty millions," we knew, had been looking up amazingly after the temporary depression of the moneyed crisis it had gone through; and the bankers had paid our drafts with confidence, and without extra charges, during the whole time we had been absent. It is true, Uncle Ro, as an experienced traveller, went well fortified in the way of credit – a precaution by no means unnecessary with Americans, after the cry that had been raised against us in the old world.

And here I wish to say one thing plainly, before I write another line. As for falling into the narrow, self-adulatory, provincial feeling of the American who has never left his mother's apron-string, and which causes him to swallow, open-mouthed, all the nonsense that is uttered to the world in the columns of newspapers, or in the pages of your yearling travellers, who go on "excursions" before they are half instructed in the social usages and the distinctive features of their own country, I hope I shall be just as far removed from such a weakness, in any passing remark that may flow from my pen, as from the crime of confounding principles and denying facts in a way to do discredit to the land of my birth and that of my ancestors. I have lived long enough in the "world," not meaning thereby the south-east corner of the north-west township of Connecticut, to understand that we are a vast way behind older nations, in *thought* as well as deed, in many things; while, on the opposite hand, they are a vast way behind us in others. I see no patriotism in concealing a wholesome truth; and least of all shall I be influenced by the puerility of a desire to hide anything of this nature, because I cannot communicate it to my countrymen without communicating it to the rest of the world. If England or France had acted on this narrow principle, where would have been their Shakspeares, their Sheridans, their Beaumonts and Fletchers, and their Molieres! No, no! great national truths are not to be treated as the gossiping surmises of village crones. He who reads what I *write*, therefore, must expect to find what I *think* of matters and things, and not exactly what he may happen to think on the same subjects. Any one is at liberty to compare opinions with me; but I ask the privilege of possessing some small liberty of conscience in what is, far and near, proclaimed to be the *only* free country on the earth. By "far and near," I mean from the St. Croix to the Rio Grande, and from Cape Cod to the entrance of St. Juan de Fuca; and a pretty farm it makes, the "interval" that lies between these limits! One may call it "far and near" without the imputation of obscurity, or that of vanity.

Our tour was completed, in spite of all annoyances; and here we were again, within the walls of magnificent Paris! The postilions had been told to drive to the hotel, in the rue St. Dominique; and we sat down to dinner, an hour after our arrival, under our own roof. My uncle's tenant had left the apartment a month before, according to agreement; and the porter and his wife had engaged a cook, set the rooms in order, and prepared everything for our arrival.

"It must be owned, Hugh," said my uncle, as he finished his soup that day, "one *may* live quite comfortably in Paris, if he possess the *savoir vivre*. Nevertheless, I have a strong desire to get a taste of native air. One may say and think what he pleases about the Paris pleasures, and the Paris *cuisine*, and all that sort of things; but "home is home, be it ever so homely." A 'd'Inde aux truffes' is capital eating; so is a turkey with cranberry sauce. I sometimes think I could fancy even a pumpkin pie, though there is not a fragment of the rock of Plymouth in the granite of my frame."

"I have always told you, sir, that America is a capital eating and drinking country, let it want civilization in other matters, as much as it may."

"Capital for eating and drinking, Hugh, if you can keep clear of the grease, in the first place, and find a real cook, in the second. There is as much difference between the cookery of New England, for instance, and that of the Middle States, barring the Dutch, as there is between that of England and Germany. The cookery of the Middle States, and of the Southern States, too, though that savours a little of the West Indies – but the cookery of the Middle States is English, in its best sense; meaning the hearty, substantial, savoury dishes of the English in their true domestic life, with their roast-beef underdone, their beefsteaks done to a turn, their chops full of gravy, their mutton-broth, legs-of-mutton, *et id omne genus*. We have some capital things of our own, too; such as canvass-backs, reedbirds, sheepshead, shad, and blackfish. The difference between New England and the Middle

States is still quite observable, though in my younger days it was *patent*. I suppose the cause has been the more provincial origin, and the more provincial habits, of our neighbours. By George! Hugh, one could fancy clam-soup just now, eh!"

"Clam-soup, sir, well made, is one of the most delicious soups in the world. If the cooks of Paris could get hold of the dish, it would set them up for a whole season."

"What is 'crême de Bavière,' and all such nick-nacks, boy, to a good plateful of clam-soup? Well made, as you say – made as a cook of Jennings used to make it, thirty years since. Did I ever mention that fellow's soup to you before, Hugh?"

"Often, sir. I have tasted very excellent clam-soup, however, that he never saw. Of course you mean soup just flavoured by the little hard-clam – none of your vulgar *potage* à la soft-clam?"

"Soft-clams be hanged! they are not made for gentlemen to eat. Of course I mean the hard-clam, and the small clam, too —

Here's your fine clams,
As white as snow;
On Rockaway
These clams do grow.

The cries of New York are quite going out, like everything else at home that is twenty years old. Shall I send you some of this eternal *poulet à la Marengo?* I wish it were honest American boiled fowl, with a delicate bit of shoat-pork alongside of it. I feel amazingly *homeish* this evening, Hugh!"

"It is quite natural, my dear uncle Ro; and I own to the 'soft impeachment' myself. Here have we both been absent from our native land five years, and half that time almost without hearing from it. We know that Jacob" – this was a free negro who served my uncle, a relic of the old domestic system of the colonies, whose name would have been Jaaf, or Yop, thirty years before – "has gone to our banker's for letters and papers; and that naturally draws our thoughts to the other side of the Atlantic. I dare say we shall both feel relieved at breakfast to-morrow, when we shall have read our respective despatches."

"Come, let us take a glass of wine together, in the good old York fashion, Hugh. Your father and I, when boys, never thought of wetting our lips with the half-glass of Madeira that fell to our share, without saying, 'Good health, Mall!' 'Good health, Hodge!'"

"With all my heart, uncle Ro. The custom was getting to be a little obsolete even before I left home; but it is almost an American custom, by sticking to us longer than to most people."

"Henri!"

This was my uncle's maitre d'hotel, whom he had kept at board-wages the whole time of our absence, in order to make sure of his ease, quiet, taste, skill, and honesty, on his return.

"Monsieur!"

"I dare say" – my uncle spoke French exceedingly well for a foreigner; but it is better to translate what he said as we go – "I dare say this glass of vin de Bourgogne is very good; it *looks* good, and it came from a wine-merchant on whom I can rely; but Mons. Hugh and I are going to drink together, à l'Amèricaine, and I dare say you will let us have a glass of Madeira, though it is somewhat late in the dinner to take it."

"Tres volontiers, Messieurs – it is my happiness to oblige you."

Uncle Ro and I took the Madeira together; but I cannot say much in favour of its quality.

"What a capital thing is a good Newtown pippin!" exclaimed my uncle, after eating a while in silence. "They talk a great deal about their *poire beurrée*, here at Paris; but, to my fancy, it will not compare with the Newtowners we grow at Satanstoe, where, by the way, the fruit is rather better, I think, than that one finds across the river, at Newtown itself."

"They are capital apples, sir; and your orchard at Satanstoe is one of the best I know, or rather what is left of it; for I believe a portion of your trees are in what is now a suburb of Dibbletonborough?"

"Yes, blast that place! I wish I had never parted with a foot of the old neck, though I did rather make money by the sale. But money is no compensation for the affections."

"*Rather* make money, my dear sir! Pray, may I ask what Satanstoe was valued at, when you got it from my grandfather?"

"Pretty well up, Hugh; for it was, and indeed *is*, a first-rate farm. Including sedges and salt-meadows, you will remember that there are quite five hundred acres of it, altogether."

"Which you inherited in 1829?"

"Of course; that was the year of my father's death. Why, the place was thought to be worth about thirty thousand dollars at that time; but land was rather low in Westchester in 1829."

"And you sold two hundred acres, including the point, the harbour, and a good deal of the sedges, for the moderate modicum of one hundred and ten thousand, cash. A tolerable sale, sir!"

"No, not cash. I got only eighty thousand down, while thirty thousand were secured by mortgage."

"Which mortgage you hold yet, I dare say, if the truth were told, covering the whole city of Dibbletonborough. A city ought to be good security for thirty thousand dollars?"

"It is not, nevertheless, in this case. The speculators who bought of me in 1835 laid out their town, built a hotel, a wharf, and a warehouse, and then had an auction. They sold four hundred lots, each twenty-five feet by a hundred, regulation size, you see, at an average of two hundred and fifty dollars, receiving one-half, or fifty thousand dollars, down, and leaving the balance on mortgage. Soon after this, the bubble burst, and the best lot at Dibbletonborough would not bring, under the hammer, twenty dollars. The hotel and the warehouse stand alone in their glory, and will thus stand until they fall, which will not be a thousand years hence, I rather think."

"And what is the condition of the town-plot?"

"Bad enough. The landmarks are disappearing; and it would cost any man who should attempt it, the value of his lot, to hire a surveyor to find his twenty-five by a hundred."

"But your mortgage is good?"

"Ay, good in one sense; but it would puzzle a Philadelphia lawyer to foreclose it. Why, the equitable interests in that town-plot, people the place of themselves. I ordered my agent to commence buying up the rights, as the shortest process of getting rid of them; and he told me in the very last letter I received, that he had succeeded in purchasing the titles to three hundred and seventeen of the lots, at an average price of ten dollars. The remainder, I suppose, will have to be absorbed."

"Absorbed! That is a process I never heard of, as applied to land."

"There is a good deal of it done, notwithstanding, in America. It is merely including within your own possession, adjacent land for which no claimant appears. What can I do? No owners are to be found; and then my mortgage is always a title. A possession of twenty years under a mortgage is as good as a deed in fee-simple, with full covenants of warranty, barring minors and *femmes covert*."

"You did better by Lilacsbush?"

"Ah, *that* was a clean transaction, and has left no drawbacks. Lilacsbush being on the island of Manhattan, one is sure there will be a town there, some day or other. It is true, the property lies quite eight miles from the City Hall; nevertheless, it has a value, and can always be sold at something near it. Then the plan of New York is made and recorded, and one can find his lots. Nor can any man say when the town will not reach Kingsbridge."

"You got a round price for the Bush, too, I have heard, sir?"

"I got three hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars, in hard cash. I would give no credit, and have every dollar of the money, at this moment, in good six per cent. stock of the States of New York and Ohio."

"Which some persons in this part of the world would fancy to be no very secure investment."

"More fools they. America is a glorious country, after all, Hugh; and it is a pride and a satisfaction to belong to it. Look back at it, as I can remember it, a nation spit upon by all the rest of Christendom – "

"You must at least own, my dear sir," I put in, somewhat pertly, perhaps, "the example might tempt other people; for, if ever there was a nation that is assiduously spitting on itself, it is our own beloved land."

"True, it has that nasty custom in excess, and it grows worse instead of better, as the influence of the better mannered and better educated diminishes; but this is a spot on the sun – a mere flaw in the diamond, that friction will take out. But what a country – what a glorious country, in truth, it is! You have now done the civilized parts of the old world pretty thoroughly, my dear boy, and must be persuaded, yourself, of the superiority of your native land."

"I remember you have always used this language, uncle Ro; yet have you passed nearly one-half of your time *out* of that glorious country, since you have reached man's estate."

"The mere consequence of accidents and tastes. I do not mean that America is a country for a bachelor, to begin with; the means of amusement for those who have no domestic hearths, are too limited for the bachelor. Nor do I mean that society in America, in its ordinary meaning, is in any way as well-ordered, as tasteful, as well-mannered, as agreeable, or as instructive and useful, as society in almost any European country I know. I have never supposed that the man of leisure, apart from the affections, could ever enjoy himself half as much at home, as he may enjoy himself in this part of the world; and I am willing to admit that, intellectually, most gentlemen in a great European capital live as much in one day, as they would live in a week in such places as New York, and Philadelphia, and Baltimore."

"You do not include Boston, I perceive, sir."

"Of Boston I say nothing. They take the mind hard, there, and we had better let such a state of things alone. But as respects a man or woman of leisure, a man or woman of taste, a man or woman of refinement generally, I am willing enough to admit that, *cæteris paribus*, each can find far more enjoyment in Europe than in America. But the philosopher, the philanthropist, the political economist – in a word, the patriot, may well exult in such elements of profound national superiority as may be found in America."

"I hope these elements are not so profound but they can be dug up at need, uncle Ro?"

"There will be little difficulty in doing that, my boy. Look at the equality of the laws, to begin with. They are made on the principles of natural justice, and are intended for the benefit of society – for the poor as well as the rich."

"Are they also intended for the rich as well as the poor?"

"Well, I will grant you a slight blemish is beginning to appear, in that particular. It is a failing incidental to humanity, and we must not expect perfection. There is certainly a slight disposition to legislate for numbers, in order to obtain support at the polls, which has made the relation of debtor and creditor a little insecure, possibly; but prudence can easily get along with that. It is erring on the right side, is it not, to favour the poor instead of the rich, if either is to be preferred?"

"Justice would favour neither, but treat all alike. I have always heard that the tyranny of numbers was the worst tyranny in the world."

"Perhaps it is, where there is actually tyranny, and for a very obvious reason. One tyrant is sooner satisfied than a million, and has even a greater sense of responsibility. I can easily conceive that the Czar himself, if disposed to be a tyrant, which I am far from thinking to be the case with Nicholas, might hesitate about doing that, under his undivided responsibility, which one of our majorities would do, without even being conscious of the oppression it exercised, or caring at all about it. But, on the whole, we do little of the last, and not in the least enough to counterbalance the immense advantages of the system."

"I have heard very discreet men say that the worst symptom of our system is the gradual decay of justice among us. The judges have lost most of their influence, and the jurors are getting to be law-makers, as well as law-breakers."

"There is a good deal of truth in that, I will acknowledge, also; and you hear it asked constantly, in a case of any interest, not which party is in the right, but *who* is on the jury. But I contend for no perfection; all I say is, that the country is a glorious country, and that you and I have every reason to be proud that old Hugh Roger, our predecessor and namesake, saw fit to transplant himself into it, a century and a half since."

"I dare say now, uncle Ro, it would strike most Europeans as singular that a man should be proud of having been born an American – Manhattanese, as you and I both were."

"All that may be true, for there have been calculated attempts to bring us into discredit of late, by harping on the failure of certain States to pay the interest on their debts. But all that is easily answered, and more so by you and me as New Yorkers. There is not a nation in Europe that would pay its interest, if those who are taxed to do so had the control of these taxes, and the power to say whether they were to be levied or not."

"I do not see how that mends the matter. These countries tell us that such is the effect of your *system* there, while we are too honest to allow such a system to *exist* in this part of the world."

"Pooh! all gammon, that. They prevent the existence of our system for very different reasons, and they coerce the payment of the interest on their debts that they may borrow more. This business of repudiation, as it is called, however, has been miserably misrepresented; and there is no answering a falsehood by an argument. No American State has repudiated its debt, that I know of, though several have been unable to meet their engagements as they have fallen due."

"*Unable*, uncle Ro?"

"Yes, *unable*– that is the precise word. Take Pennsylvania, for instance; that is one of the richest communities in the civilized world; its coal and iron alone would make any country affluent, and a portion of its agricultural population is one of the most affluent I know of. Nevertheless, Pennsylvania, owing to a concurrence of events, *could* not pay the interest on her debt for two years and a half, though she is doing it now, and will doubtless continue to do it. The sudden breaking down of that colossal moneyed institution, the *soi-disant* Bank of the United States, after it ceased to be in reality a bank of the government, brought about such a state of the circulation as rendered payment, by any of the ordinary means known to government, *impossible*. I know what I say, and repeat *impossible*. It is well known that many persons, accustomed to affluence, had to carry their plate to the mint, in order to obtain money to go to market. Then something may be attributed to the institutions, without disparaging a people's honesty. Our institutions are popular, just as those of France are the reverse; and the people, they who were on the spot – the home creditor, with his account unpaid, and with his friends and relatives in the legislature, and present to aid him, contended for his own money, before any should be sent abroad."

"Was that exactly right, sir?"

"Certainly not; it was exactly wrong, but very particularly natural. Do you suppose the King of France would not take the money for his civil list, if circumstances should compel the country to suspend on the debt for a year or two, or the ministers their salaries? My word for it, each and all of them would prefer themselves as creditors, and act accordingly. Every one of these countries has suspended in some form or other, and in many instances balanced the account with the sponge. Their clamour against us is altogether calculated with a view to political effect."

"Still, I wish Pennsylvania, for instance, had continued to pay, at every hazard."

"It is well enough to wish, Hugh; but it is wishing for an impossibility. Then you and I, as New Yorkers, have nothing to do with the debt of Pennsylvania, no more than London would have to do with the debt of Dublin or Quebec. *We* have always paid *our* interest, and, what is more, paid it more honestly, if honesty be the point, than even England has paid hers. When *our* banks suspended, the

State paid its interest in as much paper as would buy the specie in open market; whereas England made paper legal tender, and paid the interest on her debt in it for something like five-and-twenty years, and, that, too, when her paper was at a large discount. I knew of one American who held near a million of dollars in the English debt, on which he had to take unconvertible paper for the interest for a long series of years. No, no! this is all gammon, Hugh, and is not to be regarded as making us a whit worse than our neighbours. The equality of our laws is the fact in which I glory!"

"If the rich stood as fair a chance as the poor, uncle Ro."

"There *is* a screw loose there, I must confess; but it amounts to no great matter."

"Then the late bankrupt law?"

"Ay, that was an infernal procedure – that much I will acknowledge, too. It was special legislation enacted to pay particular debts, and the law was repealed as soon as it had done its duty. That is a much darker spot in our history than what is called repudiation, though perfectly honest men voted for it."

"Did you ever hear of a farce they got up about it at New York, just after we sailed?"

"Never; what was it, Hugh? though American plays are pretty much all farces."

"This was a little better than common, and, on the whole, really clever. It is the old story of Faust, in which a young spendthrift sells himself, soul and body, to the devil. On a certain evening, as he is making merry with a set of wild companions, his creditor arrives, and, insisting on seeing the master, is admitted by the servant. He comes on, club-footed and behorned, as usual, and betailed, too, I believe; but Tom is not to be scared by trifles. He insists on his guest's being seated, on his taking a glass of wine, and then on Dick's finishing his song. But, though the rest of the company had signed no bonds to Satan, they had certain outstanding book-debts, which made them excessively uncomfortable; and the odour of brimstone being rather strong, Tom arose, approached his guest, and desired to know the nature of the particular business he had mentioned to his servant. 'This bond, sir,' said Satan, significantly. 'This bond? what of it, pray? It seems all right.' 'Is not that your signature?' 'I admit it.' 'Signed in your blood?' 'A conceit of your own; I told you at the time that ink was just as good in law.' 'It is past due, seven minutes and fourteen seconds.' 'So it is, I declare! but what of that?' 'I demand payment.' 'Nonsense! no one thinks of paying now-a-days. Why, even Pennsylvania and Maryland don't pay.' 'I insist on payment.' 'Oh! you do, do you?' Tom draws a paper from his pocket, and adds, magnificently, 'There, then, if you're so urgent – there is a discharge under the new bankrupt law, signed Smith Thompson.' This knocked the devil into a cocked-hat at once."

My uncle laughed heartily at my story; but, instead of taking the matter as I had fancied he might, it made him think better of the country than ever.

"Well, Hugh, we have wit among us, it must be confessed," he cried, with the tears running down his cheeks, "if we have some rascally laws, and some rascals to administer them. But here comes Jacob with his letters and papers – I declare, the fellow has a large basket-full."

Jacob, a highly respectable black, and the great-grandson of an old negro named Jaaf, or Yop, who was then living on my own estate at Ravensnest, had just then entered, with the porter and himself lugging in the basket in question. There were several hundred newspapers, and quite a hundred letters. The sight brought home and America clearly and vividly before us; and, having nearly finished the dessert, we rose to look at the packages. It was no small task to sort our mail, there being so many letters and packages to be divided.

"Here are some newspapers I never saw before," said my uncle, as he tumbled over the pile; "'The Guardian of the Soil' – that must have something to do with Oregon."

"I dare say it has, sir. Here are at least a dozen letters from my sister."

"Ay, *your* sister is single, and can still think of her brother; but mine are married, and one letter a-year would be a great deal. This is my dear old mother's hand, however; that is something. Ursula Malbone would never forget her child. Well, *bon soir*, Hugh. Each of us has enough to do for one evening."

"*Au revoir*, sir. We shall meet at ten to-morrow, when we can compare our news, and exchange gossip."

CHAPTER II

"Why droops my lord, like over-ripen'd corn,
Hanging the head at Ceres' plenteous load?"

King Henry VI.

I did not get into my bed that night until two, nor was I out of it until half-past nine. It was near eleven when Jacob came to tell me his master was in the *salle à manger*, and ready to eat his breakfast. I hastened up stairs, sleeping in the *entresol*, and was at table with my uncle in three minutes. I observed, on entering, that he was very grave, and I now perceived that a couple of letters, and several American newspapers, lay near him. His "Good morrow, Hugh," was kind and affectionate as usual, but I fancied it sad.

"No bad news from home, I hope, sir!" I exclaimed, under the first impulse of feeling. "Martha's last letter is of quite recent date, and she writes very cheerfully. I *know* that my grandmother was perfectly well, six weeks since."

"I know the same, Hugh, for I have a letter from herself, written with her own blessed hand. My mother is in excellent health for a woman of four-score; but she naturally wishes to see us, and you in particular. Grandchildren are ever the pets with grandmothers."

"I am glad to hear all this, sir; for I was really afraid, on entering the room, that you had received some unpleasant news."

"And is all your news pleasant, after so long a silence?"

"Nothing that is disagreeable, I do assure you. Patt writes in charming spirits, and I dare say is in blooming beauty by this time, though she tells me that she is generally thought rather plain. *That* is impossible; for you know when we left her, at fifteen, she had every promise of great beauty."

"As you say, it is impossible that Martha Littlepage should be anything but handsome; for fifteen is an age when, in America, one may safely predict the woman's appearance. Your sister is preparing for you an agreeable surprise. I have heard old persons say that she was very like my mother at the same time of life; and Dus Malbone was a sort of toast once in the forest."

"I dare say it is all as you think; more especially as there are several allusions to a certain Harry Beekman in her letters, at which I should feel flattered, were I in Mr. Harry's place. Do you happen to know anything of such a family as the Beekmans, sir?"

My uncle looked up in a little surprise at this question. A thorough New Yorker by birth, associations, alliances and feelings, he held all the old names of the colony and State in profound respect; and I had often heard him sneer at the manner in which the newcomers of my day, who had appeared among us to blossom like the rose, scattered their odours through the land. It was but a natural thing that a community which had grown in population, in half a century, from half a million to two millions and a half, and that as much by immigration from adjoining communities as by natural increase, should undergo some change of feeling in this respect; but, on the other hand, it was just as natural that the true New Yorker should not.

"Of course you know, Hugh, that it is an ancient and respected name among us," answered my uncle, after he had given me the look of surprise I have already mentioned. "There is a branch of the Beekmans, or Bakemans, as we used to call them, settled near Satanstoe; and I dare say that your sister, in her frequent visits to my mother, has met with them. The association would be but natural; and the other feeling to which you allude is, I dare say, but natural to the association, though I cannot say I ever experienced it."

"You will still adhere to your asseverations of never having been the victim of Cupid, I find, sir."

"Hugh, Hugh! let us trifle no more. There *is* news from home that has almost broken my heart."

I sat gazing at my uncle in wonder and alarm, while he placed both his hands on his face, as if to exclude this wicked world, and all it contained, from his sight. I did not speak, for I saw that the old gentleman was really affected, but waited his pleasure to communicate more. My impatience was soon relieved, however, as the hands were removed, and I once more caught a view of my uncle's handsome, but clouded countenance.

"May I ask the nature of this news?" I then ventured to inquire.

"You may, and I shall now tell you. It is proper, indeed, that you should hear all, and understand it all; for you have a direct interest in the matter, and a large portion of your property is dependent on the result. Had not the manor troubles, as they were called, been spoken of before we left home?"

"Certainly, though not to any great extent. We saw something of it in the papers, I remember, just before we went to Russia; and I recollect you mentioned it as a discreditable affair to the State, though likely to lead to no very important result."

"So I then thought; but that hope has been delusive. There were some reasons why a population like ours should chafe under the situation of the estate of the late Patroon, that I thought natural, though unjustifiable; for it is unhappily too much a law of humanity to do that which is wrong, more especially in matters connected with the pocket."

"I do not exactly understand your allusion, sir."

"It is easily explained. The Van Rensselaer property is, in the first place, of great extent – the manor, as it is still called and once was, spreading east and west eight-and-forty miles, and north and south twenty-four. With a few immaterial exceptions, including the sites of three or four towns, three of which are cities containing respectively six, twenty and forty thousand souls, this large surface was the property of a single individual. Since his death, it has become the property of two, subject to the conditions of the leases, of which by far the greater portion are what are called durable."

"I have heard all this, of course, sir, and know something of it myself. But what is a durable lease? for I believe we have none of that nature at Ravensnest."

"No; your leases are all for three lives, and most of them renewals at that. There are two sorts of 'durable leases,' as we term them, in use among the landlords of New York. Both give the tenant a permanent interest being leases for ever, reserving an annual rent, with the right to distrain, and covenants of re-entry. But one class of these leases gives the tenant a right at any time to demand a deed in fee-simple, on the payment of a stipulated sum; while the other gives him no such privilege. Thus one class of these leases is called 'a durable lease with a clause of redemption;' while the other is a simple 'durable lease.'"

"And are there any new difficulties in relation to the manor rents?"

"Far worse than that; the contagion has spread, until the greatest ills that have been predicted from democratic institutions, by their worst enemies, seriously menace the country. I am afraid, Hugh, I shall not be able to call New York, any longer, an exception to the evil example of a neighbourhood, or the country itself a glorious country."

"This is so serious, sir, that, were it not that your looks denote the contrary, I might be disposed to doubt your words."

"I fear my words are only too true. Dunning has written me a long account of his own, made out with the precision of a lawyer; and, in addition, he has sent me divers papers, some of which openly contend for what is substantially a new division of property, and what in effect would be agrarian laws."

"Surely, my dear uncle, you cannot seriously apprehend anything of that nature from our order-loving, law-loving, property-loving Americans!"

"Your last description may contain the secret of the whole movement. The love of property may be so strong as to induce them to do a great many things they ought not to do. I certainly do not apprehend that any direct attempt is about to be made, in New York, to divide its property; nor do I fear any open, declared agrarian statute; for what I apprehend is to come through indirect and gradual

innovations on the right, that will be made to assume the delusive aspect of justice and equal rights, and thus undermine the principles of the people, before they are aware of the danger themselves. In order that you may not only understand me, but may understand facts that are of the last importance to your own pocket, I will first tell you what has been done, and then tell you what I fear is to follow. The first difficulty – or, rather, the first difficulty of recent occurrence – arose at the death of the late Patroon. I say of recent occurrence, since Dunning writes me that, during the administration of John Jay, an attempt to resist the payment of rent was made on the manor of the Livingstons; but *he* put it down *instanter*."

"Yes, I should rather think that roguery would not be apt to prosper, while the execution of the laws was entrusted to such a man. The age of such politicians, however, seems to have ended among us."

"It did not prosper. Governor Jay met the pretension as we all know such a man would meet it; and the matter died away, and has been nearly forgotten. It is worthy of remark, that *he* put the evil down. But this is not the age of John Jays. To proceed to my narrative: When the late Patroon died, there was due to him a sum of something like two hundred thousand dollars of back-rents, and of which he had made a special disposition in his will, vesting the money in trustees for a certain purpose. It was the attempt to collect this money which first gave rise to dissatisfaction. Those who had been debtors so long, were reluctant to pay. In casting round for the means to escape from the payment of their just debts, these men, feeling the power that numbers ever give over right in America, combined to resist with others who again had in view a project to get rid of the rents altogether. Out of this combination grew what have been called the 'manor troubles.' Men appeared in a sort of mock-Indian dress, calico shirts thrown over their other clothes, and with a species of calico masks on their faces, who resisted the bailiffs' processes, and completely prevented the collection of rents. These men were armed, mostly with rifles; and it was finally found necessary to call out a strong body of the militia, in order to protect the civil officers in the execution of their duties."

"All this occurred before we went to the East. I had supposed *those* anti-renters, as they were called, had been effectually put down."

"In appearance they were. But the very governor who called the militia into the field, referred the subject of the '*griefs*' of the tenants to the legislature, as if they were actually aggrieved citizens, when in truth it was the landlords, or the Rensselaers, for at that time the 'troubles' were confined to their property, who were the aggrieved parties. This false step has done an incalculable amount of mischief, if it do not prove the entering wedge to rive asunder the institutions of the State."

"It is extraordinary, when such things occur, that any man can mistake his duty. Why were the tenants thus spoken of, while nothing was said beyond what the law compelled in favour of the landlords?"

"I can see no reason but the fact that the Rensselaers were only two, and that the disaffected tenants were probably two thousand. With all the cry of aristocracy, and feudality, and nobility, neither of the Rensselaers, by the letter of the law, has one particle more of political power, or political right, than his own coachman or footman, if the last be a white man; while, in practice, he is in many things getting to be less protected."

"Then you think, sir, that this matter has gained force from the circumstance that so many votes depend on it?"

"Out of all question. Its success depends on the violations of principles that we have been so long taught to hold sacred, that nothing short of the over-ruling and corrupting influence of politics would dare to assail them. If there were a landlord to each farm, as well as a tenant, universal indifference would prevail as to the griefs of the tenants; and if two to one tenant, universal indignation at their impudence."

"Of what particular griefs do the tenants complain?"

"You mean the Rensselaer tenants, I suppose? Why, they *complain* of such covenants as they can, though their deepest affliction is to be found in the fact that they do not own other men's lands. The Patroon had quarter sales on many of his farms – those that were let in the last century."

"Well, what of that? A bargain to allow of quarter sales is just as fair as any other bargain."

"It is fairer, in fact, than most bargains, when you come to analyze it, since there is a very good reason why it should accompany a perpetual lease. Is it to be supposed that a landlord has no interest in the character and habits of his tenants? He has the closest interest in it possible, and no prudent man should let his lands without holding some sort of control over the assignment of leases. Now, there are but two modes of doing this; either by holding over the tenant a power through his interests, or a direct veto dependent solely on the landlord's will."

"The last would be apt to raise a pretty cry of tyranny and feudality in America!"

"Pretty cries on such subjects are very easily raised in America. More people join in them than understand what they mean. Nevertheless, it is quite as just, when two men bargain, that he who owns every right in the land before the bargain is made, should retain this right over his property, which he consents to part with only with limitations, as that he should grant it to another. These men, in their clamour, forget that until their leases were obtained, they had no right in their lands at all, and that what they have got is through those very leases of which they complain; take away the leases, and they would have no rights remaining. Now, on what principle can honest men pretend that they have rights beyond the leases? On the supposition, even, that the bargains are hard, what have governors and legislators to do with thrusting themselves in between parties so situated, as special umpires? I should object to such umpires, moreover, on the general and controlling principle that must govern all righteous arbitration – your governors and legislators are not *impartial*; they are political or party men, one may say, without exception; and such umpires, when votes are in the question, are to be sorely distrusted. I would as soon trust my interests to the decision of feed counsel, as trust them to such judges."

"I wonder the really impartial and upright portion of the community do not rise in their might, and put this thing down – rip it up, root and branch, and cast it away, at once."

"That is the weak point of our system, which has a hundred strong points, while it has this besetting vice. Our laws are not only made, but they are administered, on the supposition that there are both honesty and intelligence enough in the body of the community to see them *well* made, and *well* administered. But the sad reality shows that good men are commonly passive, until abuses become intolerable; it being the designing rogue and manager who is usually the most active. Vigilant philanthropists *do* exist, I will allow; but it is in such small numbers as to effect little on the whole, and nothing at all when opposed by the zeal of a mercenary opposition. No, no – little is ever to be expected, in a political sense, from the activity of virtue; while a great deal may be looked for from the activity of vice."

"You do not take a very favourable view of humanity, sir."

"I speak of the world as I have found it in both hemispheres, or, as your neighbour the magistrate 'Squire Newcome has it, the 'four hemispheres.' Our representation is, at the best, but an average of the qualities of the whole community, somewhat lessened by the fact that men of real merit have taken a disgust at a state of things that is not very tempting to their habits or tastes. As for a quarter sale, I can see no more hardship in it than there is in paying the rent itself; and, by giving the landlord this check on the transfer of his lands, he compels a compromise that maintains what is just. The tenant is not obliged to sell, and he makes his conditions accordingly, when he has a good tenant to offer in his stead. When he offers a bad tenant, he ought to pay for it."

"Many persons with us would think it very aristocratic," I cried, laughingly, "that a landlord should have it in his power to say, I will not accept this or that substitute for yourself."

"It is just as aristocratic, and no more so, than it would be to put it in the power of the tenant to say to the landlord, you *shall* accept this or that tenant at my hands. The covenant of the quarter sale

gives each party a control in the matter; and the result has ever been a compromise that is perfectly fair, as it is hardly possible that the circumstance should have been overlooked in making the bargain; and he who knows anything of such matters, knows that every exaction of this sort is always considered in the rent. As for feudality, so long as the power to alienate exists at all in the tenant, he does not hold by a feudal tenure. He has bought himself from all such tenures by his covenant of quarter sale; and it only remains to say whether, having agreed to such a bargain in order to obtain this advantage, he should pay the stipulated price or not."

"I understand you, sir. It is easy to come at the equity of this matter, if one will only go back to the original facts which colour it. The tenant had no rights at all until he got his lease, and can have no rights which that lease does not confer."

"Then the cry is raised of feudal privileges, because some of the Rensselaer tenants are obliged to find so many days' work with their teams, or substitutes, to the landlord, and even because they have to pay annually a pair of fat fowls! *We* have seen enough of America, Hugh, to know that most husbandmen would be delighted to have the privilege of paying their debts in chickens and work, instead of in money, which renders the cry only so much the more wicked. But what is there more feudal in a tenant's thus paying his landlord, than in a butcher's contracting to furnish so much meat for a series of years, or a mail contractor's agreeing to carry the mail in a four-horse coach for a term of years, eh? No one objects to the rent in wheat, and why should they object to the rent in chickens? Is it because our republican farmers have got to be so *aristocratic* themselves, that they do not like to be thought poulterers? This is being aristocratic on the other side. These dignitaries should remember that if it be plebeian to furnish fowls, it is plebeian to receive them; and if the tenant has to find an individual who has to submit to the degradation of tendering a pair of fat fowls, the landlord has to find an individual who has to submit to the degradation of taking them, and of putting them away in the larder. It seems to me that one is an offset to the other."

"But, if I remember rightly, uncle Ro, these little matters were always commuted for in money."

"They always must lie at the option of the tenant, unless the covenants went to forfeiture, which I never heard that they did; for the failure to pay in kind at the time stipulated, would only involve a payment in money afterwards. The most surprising part of this whole transaction is, that men among us hold the doctrine that these leasehold estates are opposed to our institutions when, being guarantied *by* the institutions, they in truth form a part of them. Were it not for these very institutions, to which they are said to be opposed, and of which they virtually form a part, we should soon have a pretty kettle of fish between landlord and tenant."

"How do you make it out that they form a part of the institutions, sir?"

"Simply because the institutions have a solemn profession of protecting property. There is such a parade of this, that all our constitutions declare that property shall never be taken without due form of law; and to read one of them, you would think the property of the citizen is held quite as sacred as his person. Now, some of these very tenures existed when the State institutions were framed; and, not satisfied with this, we of New York, in common with our sister States, solemnly prohibited ourselves, in the constitution of the United States, from ever meddling with them! Nevertheless, men are found hardy enough to assert that a thing which in fact belongs to the institutions, is opposed to them."

"Perhaps they mean, sir, to their spirit, or to their tendency."

"Ah! there may be some sense in that, though much less than the declaimers fancy. The spirit of institutions is their legitimate object; and it would be hard to prove that a leasehold tenure, with any conditions of mere pecuniary indebtedness whatever, is opposed to any institutions that recognise the full rights of property. The obligation to pay rent no more creates political dependency, than to give credit from an ordinary shop; not so much, indeed, more especially under such leases as those of the Rensselaers; for the debtor on a book-debt can be sued at any moment, whereas the tenant knows precisely when he has to pay. There is the great absurdity of those who decry the system as

feudal and aristocratic; for they do not see that those very leases are more favourable to the tenant than any other."

"I shall have to ask you to explain this to me, sir, being too ignorant to comprehend it."

"Why, these leases are perpetual, and the tenant cannot be dispossessed. The longer a lease is, other things being equal, the better it is for the tenant, all the world over. Let us suppose two farms, the one leased for five years, and the other for ever: Which tenant is most independent of the political influence of his landlord, to say nothing of the impossibility of controlling votes in this way in America, from a variety of causes? Certainly he who has a lease for ever. He is just as independent of his landlord, as his landlord can be of him, with the exception that he has rent to pay. In the latter case, he is precisely like any other debtor – like the poor man who contracts debts with the same store-keeper for a series of years. As for the possession of the farm, which we are to suppose is a desirable thing for the tenant, he of the long lease is clearly most independent, since the other may be ejected at the end of each five years. Nor is there the least difference as to acquiring the property in fee, since the landlord may sell equally in either case, if so disposed; and if not disposed, no honest man, under any system, ought to do anything to compel him so to do, either directly or indirectly; and no truly honest man would."

I put some of the words of my uncle Ro in small capitals, as the spirit of the *times*, not of the *institutions*, renders such hints necessary. But, to continue our dialogue:

"I understand you now, sir, though the distinction you make between the *spirit* of the institutions and their *tendencies* is what I do not exactly comprehend."

"It is very easily explained. The spirit of the institutions is their *intention*; their tendencies is the natural direction they take under the impulses of human motives, which are always corrupt and corrupting. The 'spirit' refers to what things *ought* to be; the 'tendencies,' to what they *are*, or are *becoming*. The 'spirit' of all political institutions is to place a check on the natural propensities of men, to restrain them, and keep them within due bounds; while the tendencies *follow* those propensities, and are quite often in direct opposition to the spirit. That this outcry against leasehold tenures in America is following the tendencies of our institutions, I am afraid is only too true; but that it is in any manner in compliance with their *spirit*, I utterly deny."

"You will allow that institutions have their spirit, which ought always to be respected, in order to preserve harmony?"

"Out of all question. The first great requisite of a political system is the means of protecting itself; the second, to check its tendencies at the point required by justice, wisdom and good faith. In a despotism, for instance, the spirit of the system is to maintain that one man, who is elevated above the necessities and temptations of a nation – who is solemnly set apart for the sole purpose of government, fortified by dignity, and rendered impartial by position – will rule in the manner most conducive to the true interests of his subjects. It is just as much the theory of Russia and Prussia that their monarchs reign not for their own good, but for the good of those over whom they are placed, as it is the theory in regard to the President of the United States. We all know that the tendencies of a despotism are to abuses of a particular character; and it is just as certain that the tendencies of a republic, or rather of a democratic republic – for republic of itself means but little, many republics having had kings – but it is just as certain that the tendencies of a democracy are to abuses of another character. Whatever man touches, he infallibly abuses; and this more in connection with the exercise of political power, perhaps, than in the management of any one interest of life, though he abuses all, even to religion. Less depends on the nominal character of institutions, perhaps, than on their ability to arrest their own tendencies at the point required by everything that is just and right. Hitherto, surprisingly few *grave* abuses have followed from our institutions; but this matter looks frightfully serious; for I have not told you half, Hugh."

"Indeed, sir! I beg you will believe me quite equal to hearing the worst."

"It is true, anti-rentism did commence on the estate of the Rensselaers, and with complaints of feudal tenures, and of days' works, and fat fowls, backed by the extravagantly aristocratic pretension that a 'manor' tenant was so much a privileged being, that it was beneath his dignity, as a free man, to do that which is daily done by mail-contractors, stage-coach owners, victuallers, and even by themselves in their passing bargains to deliver potatoes, onions, turkeys and pork, although they had solemnly covenanted with their landlords to pay the fat fowls, and to give the days' works. The feudal system has been found to extend much further, and 'troubles,' as they are called, have broken out in other parts of the State. Resistance to process, and a cessation of the payment of rents, has occurred on the Livingston property, in Hardenberg – in short, in eight or ten counties of the State. Even among the *bonâ fide* purchasers, on the Holland Purchase, this resistance has been organized, and a species of troops raised, who appear disguised and armed wherever a levy is to be made. Several men have already been murdered, and there is the strong probability of a civil war."

"In the name of what is sacred and right, what has the government of the State been doing all this time?"

"In my poor judgment, a great deal that it ought not to have done, and very little that it ought. You know the state of politics at home, Hugh; how important New York is in all national questions, and how nearly tied is her vote – less than ten thousand majority in a canvass of near half a million of votes. When this is the case, the least-principled part of the voters attain an undue importance – a truth that has been abundantly illustrated in this question. The natural course would have been to raise an armed constabulary force, and to have kept it in motion, as the anti-renters have kept their 'Injins' in motion, which would have soon tired out the rebels, for rebels they are, who would thus have had to support one army in part, and the other altogether. Such a movement on the part of the State, well and energetically managed, would have drawn half the 'Injins' at once from the ranks of disaffection to those of authority; for all that most of these men want is to live easy, and to have a parade of military movements. Instead of that, the legislature substantially did nothing, until blood was spilt, and the grievance had got to be not only profoundly disgraceful for such a State and such a country, but utterly intolerable to the well-affected of the revolted counties, as well as to those who were kept out of the enjoyment of their property. Then, indeed, it passed the law which ought to have been passed the first year of the 'Injin' system – a law which renders it felony to appear armed and disguised; but Dunning writes me this law is openly disregarded in Delaware and Schoharie, in particular, and that bodies of 'Injins,' in full costume and armed, of a thousand men, have appeared to prevent levies or sales. Where it will end, Heaven knows!"

"Do you apprehend any serious civil war?"

"It is impossible to say where false principles may lead, when they are permitted to make head and to become widely disseminated, in a country like ours. Still, the disturbances, as such, are utterly contemptible, and could and would be put down by an energetic executive in ten days after he had time to collect a force to do it with. In some particulars, the present incumbent has behaved perfectly well; while in others, in my judgment, he has inflicted injuries on the right that it will require years to repair, if, indeed, they are ever repaired."

"You surprise me, sir; and this the more especially, as I know you are generally of the same way of thinking, on political subjects, with the party that is now in power."

"Did you ever know me to support what I conceived to be wrong, Hugh, on account of my political affinities?" asked my uncle, a little reproachfully as to manner. "But, let me tell you the harm that I conceive has been done by all the governors who have had anything to do with the subject; and that includes one of a party to which I am opposed, and two that are not. In the first place, they have all treated the matter as if the tenants had really some cause of complaint; when in truth all their griefs arise from the fact that other men will not let them have their property just as they may want it, and in some respects on their own terms."

"That is certainly a grief not to be maintained by reason in a civilized country, and in a christian community."

"Umph! Christianity, like liberty, suffers fearfully in human hands; one is sometimes at a loss to recognise either. I have seen ministers of the gospel just as dogged, just as regardless of general morality, and just as indifferent to the right, in upholding *their* parties, as I ever saw laymen; and I have seen laymen manifesting tempers, in this respect, that properly belong to devils. But our governors have certainly treated this matter as if the tenants actually had griefs; when in truth their sole oppression is in being obliged to pay rents that are merely nominal, and in not being able to buy other men's property contrary to their wishes, and very much at their own prices. One governor has even been so generous as to volunteer a mode of settling disputes with which, by the way, he has no concern, there being courts to discharge that office, that is singularly presuming on his part, to say the least, and which looks a confounded sight more like aristocracy, or monarchy, than anything connected with leasehold tenure."

"Why, what can the man have done?"

"He has kindly taken on himself the office of doing that for which I fancy he can find no authority in the institutions, or in their spirit – no less than advising citizens how they may conveniently manage their own affairs so as to get over difficulties that he himself substantially admits, while giving this very advice, are difficulties that the law sanctions!"

"This is a very extraordinary interference in a public functionary; because one of the parties to a contract that is solemnly guarantied by the law, chooses to complain of its *nature*, rather than of its *conditions*, to pretend to throw the weight of his even assumed authority into the scales on either side of the question!"

"And that in a popular government, Hugh, in which it tells so strongly against a man to render him unpopular, that not one man in a million has the moral courage to resist public opinion, even when he is right. You have hit the nail on the head, boy; it is in the last degree presuming, and what would be denounced as tyrannical in any monarch in Europe. But he has lived in vain who has not learned that they who make the loudest professions of a love of liberty, have little knowledge of the quality, beyond submission to the demands of numbers. Our executive has carried his fatherly care even beyond this; he has actually suggested the terms of a bargain by which he thinks the difficulty can be settled, which, in addition to the gross assumption of having a voice in a matter that in no manner belongs to him, has the palpable demerit of recommending a pecuniary compromise that is flagrantly wrong as a mere pecuniary compromise."

"You astonish me, sir! What is the precise nature of his recommendation?"

"That the Rensselaers should receive such a sum from each tenant as would produce an interest equal to the value of the present rent. Now, in the first place, here is a citizen who has got as much property as he wants, and who wishes to live for other purposes than to accumulate. This property is not only invested to his entire satisfaction, as regards convenience, security and returns, but also in a way that is connected with some of the best sentiments of his nature. It is property that has descended to him through ancestors for two centuries; property that is historically connected with his name – on which he was born, on which he has lived, and on which he has hoped to die; property, in a word, that is associated with all the higher feelings of humanity. Because some interloper, perhaps, who has purchased an interest in one of his farms six months before, feels an *aristocratic* desire not to have a landlord, and wishes to own a farm in fee, that in fact he has no other right to than he gets through his lease, the governor of the great State of New York throws the weight of his official position against the old hereditary owner of the soil, by solemnly suggesting, in an official document that is intended to produce an effect on public opinion, that he should sell that which he does not wish to sell, but wishes to keep, and that at a price which I conceive is much below its true pecuniary value. We have liberty with a vengeance, if these are some of its antics!"

"What makes the matter worse, is the fact that each of the Rensselaers has a house on his estate, so placed as to be convenient to look after his interests; which interests he is to be at the trouble of changing, leaving him his house on his hands, because, forsooth, one of the parties to a plain and equitable bargain wishes to make better conditions than he covenanted for. I wonder what his Excellency proposes that the landlords shall do with their money when they get it? Buy new estates, and build new houses, of which to be dispossessed when a new set of tenants may choose to cry out against aristocracy, and demonstrate their own love for democracy by wishing to pull others down in order to shove themselves into their places?"

"You are right again, Hugh; but it is a besetting vice of America to regard life as all means, and as having no end, in a worldly point of view. I dare say men may be found among us who regard it as highly presuming in any man to build himself an ample residence, and to announce by his mode of living that he is content with his present means, and does not wish to increase them, at the very moment they view the suggestions of the governor as the pink of modesty, and excessively favourable to equal rights! I like that thought of yours about the house, too; in order to suit the 'spirit' of the New York institutions, it would seem that a New York landlord should build on wheels, that he may move his abode to some new estate, when it suits the pleasure of his tenants to buy him out."

"Do you suppose the Rensselaers would take their money, the principal of the rent at seven per cent., and buy land with it, after their experience of the uncertainty of such possessions among us?"

"Not they," said my uncle Ro, laughing. "No, no! they would sell the Manor-House, and Beverwyck, for taverns; and then any one might live in them who would pay the principal sum of the cost of a dinner; bag their dollars, and proceed forthwith to Wall street, and commence the shaving of notes – that occupation having been decided, as I see by the late arrivals, to be highly honourable and praiseworthy. Hitherto they have been nothing but drones; but, by the time they can go to the quick with their dollars, they will become useful members of society, and be honoured and esteemed accordingly."

What next might have been said I do not know, for just then we were interrupted by a visit from our common banker, and the discourse was necessarily changed.

CHAPTER III

"O, when shall I visit the land of my birth,
The loveliest land on the face of the earth?
When shall I those scenes of affection explore,
Our forests, our fountains,
Our hamlets, our mountains,
With the pride of our mountains, the maid I adore?"

Montgomery.

It was truly news for an American, who had been so long cut off from intelligence from home, thus suddenly to be told that some of the scenes of the middle ages – scenes connected with real wrongs and gross abuses of human rights – were about to be enacted in his own land; that country which boasted itself, not only to be the asylum of the oppressed, but the conservator of the right. I was grieved at what I had heard, for, during my travels, I had cherished a much-loved image of justice and political excellence, that I now began to fear must be abandoned. My uncle and myself decided at once to return home, a step that indeed was required by prudence. I was now of an age to enter into the full possession of my own property (so far as "new laws and new lords" would permit); and the letters received by my late guardian, as well as certain newspapers, communicated the unpleasant fact that a great many of the tenants of Ravensnest had joined the association, paid tribute for the support of "Injins," and were getting to be as bad as any of the rest of them, so far as designs and schemes to plunder were concerned, though they still paid their rents. The latter circumstance was ascribed by our agent to the fact that many leases were about to fall in, and it would be in my power to substitute more honest and better disposed successors for the present occupants of the several farms. Measures were taken accordingly for quitting Paris as soon as possible, so that we might reach home late in the month of May.

"If we had time, I would certainly throw in a memorial or two to the legislature," observed my uncle, a day or two before we proceeded to Havre to join the packet. "I have a strong desire to protest against the invasion of my rights as a freeman that is connected with some of their contemplated laws. I do not at all like the idea of being abridged of the power of hiring a farm for the longest time I can obtain it, which is one of the projects of some of the ultra reformers of free and equal New York. It is wonderful, Hugh, into what follies men precipitate themselves as soon as they begin to run into exaggerations, whether of politics, religion, or tastes. Here are half of the exquisite philanthropists who see a great evil affecting the rights of human nature in one man's hiring a farm from another for as long a term as he can obtain it, who are at the very extreme in their opinions on free trade! So free-trade are some of the journals which think it a capital thing to prevent landlords and tenants from making their own bargains, that they have actually derided the idea of having established fares for hackney-coaches, but that it would be better to let the parties stand in the rain and higgle about the price, on the free-trade principle. Some of these men are either active agents in stimulating the legislature to rob the citizen of this very simple control of his property, or passive lookers-on while others do it."

"Votes, sir, votes."

"It is, indeed, votes, sir, votes; nothing short of votes could reconcile these men to their own inconsistencies. As for yourself, Hugh, it might be well to get rid of that canopied pew – "

"Of what canopied pew? I am sure I do not understand you."

"Do you forget that the family-pew in St. Andrew's Church, at Ravensnest, has a wooden canopy over it – a relic of our colonial opinions and usages?"

"Now you mention it, I do remember a very clumsy, and, to own the truth, a very ugly thing, that I have always supposed was placed there, by those who built the church, by way of ornament."

"That ugly thing, by way of ornament, was intended for a sort of canopy, and was by no means an uncommon distinction in the State and colony, as recently as the close of the last century. The church was built at the expense of my grandfather, Gen. Littlepage, and his bosom friend and kinsman, Col. Dirck Follock, both good Whigs and gallant defenders of the liberty of their country. They thought it proper that the Littlepages should have a canopied pew, and that is the state in which they caused the building to be presented to my father. The old work still stands; and Dunning writes me that, among the other arguments used against your interests, is the fact that your pew is thus distinguished from those of the rest of the congregation."

"It is a distinction no man would envy me, could it be known that I have ever thought the clumsy, ill-shaped thing a nuisance, and detestable as an ornament. I have never even associated it in my mind with personal distinction, but have always supposed it was erected with a view to embellish the building, and placed over our pew as the spot where such an excrescence would excite the least envy."

"In all that, with one exception, you have judged quite naturally. Forty years ago, such a thing might have been done, and a majority of the parishioners would have seen in it nothing out of place. But that day has gone by; and you will discover that, on your own estate, and in the very things created by your family and yourself, you will actually have fewer rights of any sort, beyond those your money will purchase, than any man around you. The simple fact that St. Andrew's Church was built by your great-grandfather, and by him presented to the congregation, will diminish your claim to have a voice in its affairs with many of the congregation."

"This is so extraordinary, that I musk ask the reason."

"The reason is connected with a principle so obviously belonging to human nature generally, and to American nature in particular, that I wonder you ask it. It is envy. Did that pew belong to the Newcomes, for instance, no one would think anything of it."

"Nevertheless, the Newcomes would make themselves ridiculous by sitting in a pew that was distinguished from those of their neighbours. The absurdity of the contrast would strike every one."

"And it is precisely because the absurdity does not exist in your case, that your seat is envied. No one envies absurdity. However, you will readily admit, Hugh, that a church, and a church-yard, are the two last places in which human distinctions ought to be exhibited. All are equal in the eyes of Him we go to the one to worship, and all are equal in the grave. I have ever been averse to everything like worldly distinction in a congregation, and admire the usage of the Romish Church in even dispensing with pews altogether. Monuments speak to the world, and have a general connexion with history, so that they may be tolerated to a certain point, though notorious liars."

"I agree with you, sir, as to the unfitness of a church for all distinctions, and shall be happy on every account to get rid of my canopy, though that has an historical connexion, also. I am quite innocent of any feeling of pride while sitting under it, though I will confess to some of shame at its quizzical shape, when I see it has attracted the eyes of intelligent strangers."

"It is but natural that you should feel thus; for, while we may miss distinctions and luxuries to which we have ever been accustomed, they rarely excite pride in the possessor, even while they awaken envy in the looker-on."

"Nevertheless, I cannot see what the old pew has to do with the rents, or my legal rights."

"When a cause is bad, everything is pressed into it that it is believed may serve a turn. No man who had a good legal claim for property, would ever think of urging any other; nor would any legislator who had sound and sufficient reasons for his measures – reasons that could properly justify him before God and man for his laws – have recourse to slang to sustain him. If these anti-renters were right, they would have no need of secret combinations, of disguises, blood-and-thunder names, and special agents in the legislature of the land. The right requires no false aid to make it appear the right; but the wrong must get such support as it can press into its service. Your pew is called

aristocratic, though it confers no political power; it is called a patent of nobility, though it neither gives nor takes away; and it is hated, and you with it, for the very reason that you can sit in it and not make yourself ridiculous. I suppose you have not examined very closely the papers I gave you to read?"

"Enough so to ascertain that they are filled with trash."

"Worse than trash, Hugh; with some of the loosest principles, and most atrocious feelings, that degrade poor human nature. Some of the reformers propose that no man shall hold more than a thousand acres of land, while others lay down the very intelligible and distinct principle that no man ought to hold more than he can use. Even petitions to that effect, I have been told, have been sent to the legislature."

"Which has taken care not to allude to their purport, either in debate or otherwise, as I see nothing to that effect in the reports."

"Ay, I dare say the slang-whangers of those honourable bodies will studiously keep all such enormities out of sight, as some of them doubtless hope to step into the shoes of the present landlords, as soon as they can get the feet out of them which are now in. But these are the projects and the petitions in the columns of the journals, and they speak for themselves. Among other things, they say it is nobility to be a landlord."

"I see by the letter of Mr. Dunning, that they have petitioned the legislature to order an inquiry into my title. Now, we hold from the crown – "

"So much the worse, Hugh. Faugh! hold from a crown in a republican country! I am amazed you are not ashamed to own it. Do you not know, boy, that it has been gravely contended in a court of justice that, in obtaining our national independence from the King of Great Britain, the people conquered all his previous grants, which ought to be declared void and of none effect?"

"That is an absurdity of which I had not heard," I answered, laughing; "why, the people of New York, who held all their lands under the crown, would in that case have been conquering them for other persons! My good grandfather and great-grandfather, both of whom actually fought and bled in the revolution, must have been very silly thus to expose themselves to take away their own estates, in order to give them to a set of immigrants from New England and other parts of the world!"

"Quite justly said, Hugh," added my uncle, joining in the laugh. "Nor is this half of the argument. The State, too, in its corporate character, has been playing swindler all this time. You may not know the fact, but I as your guardian do know, that the quit-rents reserved by the crown when it granted the lands of Mooseridge and Ravensnest, were claimed by the State; and that, wanting money to save the people from taxes, it commuted with us, receiving a certain gross sum in satisfaction of all future claims."

"Ay, *that* I did not know. Can the fact be shown?"

"Certainly – it is well known to all old fellows like myself, for it was a very general measure, and very generally entered into by all the landholders. In our case, the receipts are still to be found among the family-papers. In the cases of the older estates, such as those of the Van Rensselaers, the equity is still stronger in their favour, since the conditions to hold the land included an obligation to bring so many settlers from Europe within a given time; conditions that were fulfilled at great cost, as you may suppose, and on which, in truth, the colony had its foundation."

"How much it tells against a people's honesty to wish to forget such facts, in a case like this!"

"There is nothing forgotten, for the facts were probably never known to those who prate about the conquered rights from the crown. As you say, however, the civilization of a community is to be measured by its consciousness of the existence of all principles of justice, and a familiarity with its own history. The great bulk of the population of New York have no active desire to invade what is right in this anti-rent struggle, having no direct interests at stake; *their* crime is a passive inactivity, which allows those who are either working for political advancement, or those who are working to obtain other men's property, to make use of them, through their own laws."

"But is it not an embarrassment to such a region as that directly around Albany, to have such tenures to the land, and for so large a body of people to be compelled to pay rent, in the very heart of the State, as it might be, and in situations that render it desirable to leave enterprise as unshackled as possible?"

"I am not prepared to admit this much, even, as a general principle. One argument used by these anti-renters is, for instance, that the patroons, in their leases, reserved the mill-seats. Now, what if they did? Some one must own the mill-seats; and why not the Patroon as well as another? To give the argument any weight, not as law, not as morals, but as mere expediency, it must be shown that the patroons would not let these mill-seats at as low rents as any one else; and my opinion is that they would let them at rents of not half the amount that would be asked, were they the property of so many individuals, scattered up and down the country. But, admitting that so large an estate of this particular sort has some inconveniences in that particular spot, can there be two opinions among men of integrity about the mode of getting rid of it? Everything has its price, and, in a business sense, everything is entitled to its price. No people acknowledge this more than the Americans, or practise on it so extensively. Let the Rensselaers be tempted by such offers as will induce them to sell, but do not let them be invaded by that most infernal of all acts of oppression, special legislation, in order to bully or frighten them from the enjoyment of what is rightfully their own. If the State think such a description of property injurious in its heart, let the State imitate England in her conduct towards the slave-holders —*buy* them out; not *tax* them out, and *wrong* them out, and *annoy* them out. But, Hugh, enough of this at present; we shall have much more than we want of it when we get home. Among my letters, I have one from each of my other wards."

"'Still harping on my daughter,' sir!" I answered, laughing. "I hope that the vivacious Miss Henrietta Coldbrooke, and the meek Miss Anne Marston, are both perfectly well?"

"Both in excellent health, and both write charmingly. I must really let you see the letter of Henrietta, as I do think it is quite creditable to her: I will step into my room and get it."

I ought to let the reader into a secret here that will have some connexion with what is to follow. A dead-set had been made at me, previously to leaving home, to induce me to marry either of three young ladies – Miss Henrietta Coldbrooke, Miss Anne Marston, and Miss Opportunity Newcome. The advances in the cases of Miss Henrietta Coldbrooke and Miss Anne Marston came from my uncle Ro, who, as their guardian, had a natural interest in their making what he was pleased to think might be a good connexion for either; while the advances on account of Miss Opportunity Newcome came from herself. Under such circumstances, it may be well to say who these young ladies actually were.

Miss Henrietta Coldbrooke was the daughter of an Englishman of good family, and some estate, who had emigrated to America and married, under the impulse of certain theories in politics which induced him to imagine that this was the promised land. I remember him as a disappointed and dissatisfied widower, who was thought to be daily growing poorer under the consequences of indiscreet investments, and who at last got to be so very English in his wishes and longings, as to assert that the common Muscovy was a better bird than the canvas-back! He died, however, in time to leave his only child an estate which, under my uncle's excellent management, was known by me to be rather more than one hundred and seventy-nine thousand dollars, and which produced a nett eight thousand a-year. This made Miss Henrietta a belle at once; but, having a prudent friend in my grandmother, as yet she had not married a beggar. I knew that uncle Ro went quite as far as was proper, in his letters, in the way of hints touching myself; and my dear, excellent, honest-hearted, straightforward old grandmother had once let fall an expression, in one of her letters to myself, which induced me to think that these hints had actually awakened as much interest in the young lady's bosom, as could well be connected with what was necessarily nothing but curiosity.

Miss Anne Marston was also an heiress, but on a very diminished scale. She had rather more than three thousand a-year in buildings in town, and a pretty little sum of about sixteen thousand dollars laid by out of its savings. She was not an only child, however, having two brothers, each of

whom had already received as much as the sister, and each of whom, as is very apt to be the case with the heirs of New York merchants, was already in a fair way of getting rid of his portion in riotous living. Nothing does a young American so much good, under such circumstances, as to induce him to travel. It makes or breaks at once. If a downright fool, he is plucked by European adventurers in so short a time, that the agony is soon over. If only vain and frivolous, because young and ill-educated, the latter being a New York endemic, but with some foundation of native mind, he lets his whiskers grow, becomes fuzzy about the chin, dresses better, gets to be much better mannered, soon loses his taste for the low and vulgar indulgences of his youth, and comes out such a gentleman as one can only make who has entirely thrown away the precious moments of youth. If tolerably educated in boyhood, with capacity to build on, the chances are that the scales will fall from his eyes very fast on landing in the old world – that his ideas and tastes will take a new turn – that he will become what nature intended him for, an intellectual man; and that he will finally return home, conscious alike of the evils and blessings, the advantages and disadvantages, of his own system and country – a wiser, and it is to be hoped a better man. How the experiment had succeeded with the Marstons, neither myself nor my uncle knew; for they had paid their visit while we were in the East, and had already returned to America. As for Miss Anne, she had a mother to take care of her mind and person, though I had learned she was pretty, sensible and discreet.

Miss Opportunity Newcome was a belle of Ravensnest, a village on my own property; a rural beauty, and of rural education, virtues, manners and habits. As Ravensnest was not particularly advanced in civilization, or, to make use of the common language of the country, was not a very "aristocratic place," I shall not dwell on her accomplishments, which did well enough for Ravensnest, but would not essentially ornament my manuscript.

Opportunity was the daughter of Ovid, who was the son of Jason, of the house of Newcome. In using the term "house," I adopt it understandingly; for the family had dwelt in the same tenement, a leasehold property of which the fee was in myself, and the dwelling had been associated with the name of Newcome from time immemorial; that is, for about eighty years. All that time had a Newcome been the tenant of the mill, tavern, store and farm, that lay nearest the village of Ravensnest, or Little Nest, as it was commonly called; and it may not be impertinent to the moral of my narrative if I add that, for all that time, and for something longer, had I and my ancestors been the landlords. I beg the reader to bear this last fact in mind, as there will soon be occasion to show that there was a strong disposition in certain persons to forget it.

As I have said, Opportunity was the daughter of Ovid. There was also a brother, who was named Seneca, or Sene*ky*, as he always pronounced it himself, the son of Ovid, the son of Jason, the first of the name at Ravensnest. This Seneca was a lawyer, in the sense of a license granted by the Justices of the Supreme Court, as well as by the Court of Common Pleas, in and for the county of Washington. As there had been a sort of hereditary education among the Newcomes for three generations, beginning with Jason, and ending with Seneca; and, as the latter was at the bar, I had occasionally been thrown into the society of both brother and sister. The latter, indeed, used to be fond of visiting the Nest, as my house was familiarly called, Ravensnest being its true name, whence those of the "patent" and village; and as Opportunity had early manifested a partiality for my dear old grandmother, and not less dear young sister, who occasionally passed a few weeks with me during the vacations, more especially in the autumns, I had many occasions of being brought within the influence of her charms – opportunities that, I feel bound to state, Opportunity did not neglect. I have understood that her mother, who bore the same name, had taught Ovid the art of love by a very similar demonstration, and had triumphed. That lady was still living, and may be termed Opportunity the Great, while the daughter can be styled Opportunity the Less. There was very little difference between my own years and those of the young lady; and, as I had last passed through the fiery ordeal at the sinister age of twenty, there was not much danger in encountering the risk anew, now I was five years older. But I must return to my uncle and the letter of Miss Henrietta Coldbrooke.

"Here it is, Hugh," cried my guardian, gaily; "and a capital letter it is! I wish I could read the whole of it to you; but the two girls made me promise never to show their letters to any one, which could mean only you, before they would promise to write anything to me beyond commonplaces. Now, I get their sentiments freely and naturally, and the correspondence is a source of much pleasure to me. I think, however, I might venture just to give you one extract."

"You had better not, sir; there would be a sort of treachery in it, that I confess I would rather not be accessary to. If Miss Coldbrooke do not wish me to read what she writes, she can hardly wish that you should read any of it to me."

Uncle Ro glanced at me, and I fancied he seemed dissatisfied with my *nonchalance*. He read the letter through to himself, however, laughing here, smiling there, then muttering "capital!" "good!" "charming girl!" "worthy of Hannah More!" &c. &c., as if just to provoke my curiosity. But I had no desire to read "Hannah More," as any young fellow of five-and-twenty can very well imagine, and I stood it all with the indifference of a stoic. My guardian had to knock under, and put the letters in his writing-desk.

"Well, the girls will be glad to see us," he said, after a moment of reflection, "and not a little surprised. In my very last letter to my mother, I sent them word that we should not be home until October; and now we shall see them as early as June, at least."

"Patt will be delighted, I make no doubt. As for the other two young ladies, they have so many friends and relations to care for, that I fancy our movements give them no great concern."

"Then you do both injustice, as their letters would prove. They take the liveliest interest in our proceedings, and speak of my return as if they look for it with the greatest expectation and joy."

I made my uncle Ro a somewhat saucy answer; but fair-dealing compels me to record it.

"I dare say they do, sir," was my reply; "but what young lady does not look with '*expectation* and joy' for the return of a friend, who is known to have a long purse, from Paris!"

"Well, Hugh, you deserve neither of those dear girls; and, if I can help it, you shall have neither."

"Thank'ee, sir!"

"Poh! this is worse than silly – it is rude. I dare say neither would accept you, were you to offer to-morrow."

"I trust not, sir, for her own sake. It would be a singularly palpable demonstration were either to accept a man she barely knew, and whom she had not seen since she was fifteen."

Uncle Ro laughed, but I could see he was confoundedly vexed; and, as I loved him with all my heart, though I did not love match-making, I turned the discourse, in a pleasant way, on our approaching departure.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Hugh," cried my uncle, who was a good deal of a boy in some things, for the reason, I suppose, that he was an old bachelor; "I'll just have wrong names entered on board the packet, and we'll surprise all our friends. Neither Jacob nor your man will betray us, we know; and, for that matter, we can send them both home by the way of England. Each of us has trunks in London to be looked after, and let the two fellows go by the way of Liverpool. That is a good thought, and occurred most happily."

"With all my heart, sir. My fellow is of no more use to me at sea than an automaton would be, and I shall be glad to get rid of his rueful countenance. He is a capital servant on terrâ firma, but a perfect Niobe on the briny main."

The thing was agreed on; and, a day or two afterwards, both our body-servants, that is to say, Jacob the black and Hubert the German, were on their way to England. My uncle let his apartment again, for he always maintained I should wish to bring my bride to pass a winter in it; and we proceeded to Havre in a sort of incognito. There was little danger of our being known on board the packet, and we had previously ascertained that there was not an acquaintance of either in the ship. There was a strong family resemblance between my uncle and myself, and we passed for father and son in the ship, as old Mr. Davidson and young Mr. Davidson, of Maryland – or Myr-r-land, as it is Doric to

call that state. We had no concern in this part of the deception, unless abstaining from calling my supposed father "uncle," as one would naturally do in strange society, can be so considered.

The passage itself – by the way, I wish all landsmen would be as accurate as I am here, and understand that a "voyage" means "out" and "home," or "thence" and "back again," while a "passage" means from place to place – but our passage was pregnant with no events worth recording. We had the usual amount of good and bad weather, the usual amount of eating and drinking, and the usual amount of ennui. The latter circumstance, perhaps, contributed to the digesting of a further scheme of my uncle's, which it is now necessary to state.

A re-perusal of his letters and papers had induced him to think the anti-rent movement a thing of more gravity, even than he had first supposed. The combination on the part of the tenants, we learned also from an intelligent New Yorker who was a fellow-passenger, extended much further than our accounts had given us reason to believe; and it was deemed decidedly dangerous for landlords, in many cases, to be seen on their own estates. Insult, personal degradation, or injury, and even death, it was thought, might be the consequences, in many cases. The blood actually spilled had had the effect to check the more violent demonstrations, it is true; but the latent determination to achieve their purposes was easily to be traced among the tenants, in the face of all their tardy professions of moderation, and a desire for nothing but what was right. In this case, what was right was the letter and spirit of the contracts; and nothing was plainer than the fact that these were not what was wanted.

Professions pass for nothing, with the experienced, when connected with a practice that flatly contradicts them. It was only too apparent to all who chose to look into the matter, and that by evidence which could not mislead, that the great body of the tenants in various counties of New York were bent on obtaining interests in their farms that were not conveyed by their leases, without the consent of their landlords, and insomuch that they were bent on doing that which should be discountenanced by every honest man in the community. The very fact that they supported, or in any manner connived at, the so-called "Injin" system, spoke all that was necessary as to their motives; and, when we come to consider that these "Injins" had already proceeded to the extremity of shedding blood, it was sufficiently plain that things must soon reach a crisis.

My uncle Roger and myself reflected on all these matters calmly, and decided on our course, I trust, with prudence. As that decision has proved to be pregnant with consequences that are likely to affect my future life, I shall now briefly give an outline of what induced us to adopt it.

It was all-important for us to visit Ravensnest in person, while it might be hazardous to do so openly. The 'Nest house stood in the very centre of the estate, and, ignorant as we were of the temper of the tenants, it might be indiscreet to let our presence be known; and circumstances favoured our projects of concealment. We were not expected to reach the country at all until autumn, or "fall," as that season of the year is poetically called in America; and this gave us the means of reaching the property unexpectedly, and, as we hoped, undetected. Our arrangement, then, was very simple, and will be best related in the course of the narrative.

The packet had a reasonably short passage, as we were twenty-nine days from land to land. It was on a pleasant afternoon in May when the hummock-like heights of Navesink were first seen from the deck; and, an hour later, we came in sight of the tower-resembling sails of the coasters which were congregating in the neighbourhood of the low point of land that is so very appropriately called *Sandy* Hook. The light-houses rose out of the water soon after, and objects on the shore of New Jersey next came gradually out of the misty back-ground, until we got near enough to be boarded, first by the pilot, and next by the news-boat; the first preceding the last for a wonder, news usually being far more active, in this good republic, than watchfulness to prevent evil. My uncle Ro gave the crew of this news-boat a thorough scrutiny, and, finding no one on board her whom he had ever before seen, he bargained for a passage up to town.

We put our feet on the Battery just as the clocks of New York were striking eight. A custom-house officer had examined our carpet-bags and permitted them to pass, and we had disburthened

ourselves of the effects in the ship, by desiring the captain to attend to them. Each of us had a town-house, but neither would go near his dwelling; mine being only kept up in winter, for the use of my sister and an aunt who kindly took charge of her during the season, while my uncle's was opened principally for his mother. At that season, we had reason to think neither was tenanted but by one or two old family servants; and it was our cue also to avoid them. But "Jack Dunning," as my uncle always called him, was rather more of a friend than of an agent; and he had a bachelor establishment in Chamber Street that was precisely the place we wanted. Thither, then, we proceeded, taking the route by Greenwich Street, fearful of meeting some one in Broadway by whom we might be recognised.

CHAPTER IV

Cit. "Speak, speak."
1 *Cit.* "You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?"
Cit. "Resolved, resolved."
1 *Cit.* "First you know, Caius Marcus is chief enemy to the people."
Cit. "We know't, we know't."
1 *Cit.* "Let's kill him, and we'll have corn at our own price.
Is't a verdict?"

Coriolanus.

The most inveterate Manhattanese, if he be anything of a man of the world, must confess that New York is, after all, but a Rag-Fair sort of a place, so far as the eye is concerned. I was particularly struck with this fact, even at that hour, as we went stumbling along over an atrociously bad side-walk, my eyes never at rest, as any one can imagine, after five years of absence. I could not help noting the incongruities; the dwellings of marble, in close proximity with miserable, low constructions in wood; the wretched pavements, and, above all, the country air, of a town of near four hundred thousand souls. I very well know that many of the defects are to be ascribed to the rapid growth of the place, which gives it a sort of hobbledehoy look; but, being a Manhattanese by birth, I thought I might just as well own it all, at once, if it were only for the information of a particular portion of my townsmen, who may have been under a certain delusion on the subject. As for comparing the Bay of New York with that of Naples on the score of beauty, I shall no more be guilty of any such folly, to gratify the cockney feelings of Broadway and Bond street, than I should be guilty of the folly of comparing the commerce of the ancient Parthenope with that of *old* New York, in order to excite complacency in the bosom of some bottegajo in the Toledo, or on the Chiaja. Our fast-growing Manhattan is a great town in its way – a wonderful place – without a parallel, I do believe, on earth, as a proof of enterprise and of the accumulation of business; and it is not easy to make such a town appear ridiculous by any jibes and innuendoes that relate to the positive things of this world, though nothing is easier than to do it for itself by setting up to belong to the sisterhood of such places as London, Paris, Vienna and St. Petersburg. There is too much of the American notion of the omnipotence of numbers among us Manhattanese, which induces us to think that the higher rank in the scale of places is to be obtained by majorities. No, no; let us remember the familiar axiom of "ne sutor ultra crepidum." New York is just the queen of "business," but not yet the queen of the world. Every man who travels ought to bring back something to the common stock of knowledge; and I shall give a hint to my townsmen, by which I really think they may be able to tell for themselves, as by feeling a sort of moral pulse, when the town is rising to the level of a capital. When simplicity takes the place of pretension, is one good rule; but, as it may require a good deal of practice, or native taste, to ascertain this fact, I will give another that is obvious to the senses, which will at least be strongly symptomatic; and that is this: When *squares* cease to be called *parks*; when horse-bazaars and fashionable streets are not called Tattersalls and Bond street; when *Washington* Market is rechristened *Bear* Market, and Franklin and Fulton and other great philosophers and inventors are plucked of the unmerited honours of having shambles named after them; when *commercial* is not used as a prefix to emporium; when people can return from abroad without being asked "if they are reconciled to their country," and strangers are not interrogated at the second question, "how do you like *our city?*" then may it be believed that the town is beginning to go alone, and that it may set up for itself.

Although New York is, out of all question, decidedly provincial, labouring under the peculiar vices of provincial habits and provincial modes of thinking, it contains many a man of the world, and

some, too, who have never quitted their own firesides. Of this very number was the Jack Dunning, as my uncle Ro called him, to whose house in Chamber street we were now proceeding.

"If we were going anywhere but to Dunning's," said my uncle, as we turned out of Greenwich street, "I should have no fear of being recognised by the servants; for no one here thinks of keeping a man six months. Dunning, however, is of the old school, and does not like new faces; so he will have no Irishman at his door, as is the case with two out of three of the houses at which one calls, now-a-days."

In another minute we were at the bottom of Mr. Dunning's "stoup" – what an infernal contrivance it is to get in and out at the door by, in a hotty-cold climate like ours! – but, there we were, and I observed that my uncle hesitated.

"*Parlez au* Suisse," said I; "ten to one he is fresh from some Bally-this, or Bally-that."

"No, no; it must be old Garry the nigger" – my uncle Ro was of the old school himself, and *would* say "nigger" – "Jack can never have parted with Garry."

"Garry" was the diminutive of Garret, a somewhat common Dutch christian name among us.

We rang, and the door opened – in about five minutes. Although the terms "aristocrat" and "aristocracy" are much in men's mouths in America just now, as well as those of "feudal" and the "middle ages," and this, too, as applied to modes of living as well as to leasehold tenures, there is but one porter in the whole country; and he belongs to the White House, at Washington. I am afraid even that personage, royal porter as he is, is often out of the way; and the reception he gives when he *is* there, is not of the most brilliant and princely character. When we had waited three minutes, my uncle Ro said —

"I am afraid Garry is taking a nap by the kitchen-fire; I'll try him again."

Uncle Ro did try again, and, two minutes later, the door opened.

"What is your pleasure?" demanded the *Suisse*, with a strong brogue.

My uncle started back as if he had met a sprite; but he asked if Mr. Dunning was at home.

"He is, indeed, sir."

"Is he alone, or is he with company?"

"He is, indeed."

"But *what* is he, indeed?"

"He is *that*."

"Can you take the trouble to explain which *that* it is? Has he company, or is he alone?"

"Just *that*, sir. Walk in, and he'll be charmed to see you. A fine gentleman is his honour, and pleasure it is to live with him, I'm sure!"

"How long is it since you left Ireland, my friend?"

"Isn't it a mighty bit, now, yer honour!" answered Barney, closing the door. "T'irteen weeks, if it's one day."

"Well, go ahead, and show us the way. This is a bad omen, Hugh, to find that Jack Dunning, of all men in the country, should have changed his servant – good, quiet, lazy, respectable, old, grey-headed Garry the nigger – for such a bogtrotter as that fellow, who climbs those stairs as if accustomed only to ladders."

Dunning was in his library on the second floor, where he passed most of his evenings. His surprise was equal to that which my uncle had just experienced, when he saw us two standing before him. A significant gesture, however, caused him to grasp his friend and client's hand in silence; and nothing was said until the *Swiss* had left the room, although the fellow stood with the door in his hand a most inconvenient time, just to listen to what might pass between the host and his guests. At length we got rid of him, honest, well-meaning fellow that he was, after all; and the door was closed.

"My last letters have brought you home, Roger?" said Jack, the moment he *could* speak; for feeling, as well as caution, had something to do with his silence.

"They have, indeed. A great change must have come over the country, by what I hear; and one of the very worst symptoms is that you have turned away Garry, and got an Irishman in his place."

"Ah! old men must die, as well as old principles, I find. My poor fellow went off in a fit last week, and I took that Irishman as a *pis aller*. After losing poor Garry, who was born a slave in my father's house, I became indifferent, and accepted the first comer from the intelligence office."

"We must be careful, Dunning, not to give up too soon. But hear my story, and then to other matters."

My uncle then explained his wish to be incognito, and his motive. Dunning listened attentively, but seemed uncertain whether to dissent or approve. The matter was discussed briefly, and then it was postponed for further consideration.

"But how comes on this great moral dereliction, called anti-rentism? Is it on the wane, or the increase?"

"On the wane, to the eye, perhaps; but on the increase so far as principles, the right, and facts, are concerned. The necessity of propitiating votes is tempting politicians of all sides to lend themselves to it; and there is imminent danger now that atrocious wrongs will be committed under the form of law."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.