

The Adventures Harry Richmond — Volume 6 eBook

The Adventures Harry Richmond — Volume 6 by George Meredith

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

The Adventures Harry Richmond — Volume 6 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	5
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	9
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	12
Page 6.....	14
Page 7.....	15
Page 8.....	17
Page 9.....	19
Page 10.....	21
Page 11.....	23
Page 12.....	24
Page 13.....	26
Page 14.....	28
Page 15.....	29
Page 16.....	30
Page 17.....	32
Page 18.....	34
Page 19.....	36
Page 20.....	38
Page 21.....	40
Page 22.....	41

Page 23.....	43
Page 24.....	45
Page 25.....	47
Page 26.....	49
Page 27.....	51
Page 28.....	52
Page 29.....	53
Page 30.....	54
Page 31.....	55
Page 32.....	56
Page 33.....	57
Page 34.....	59
Page 35.....	61
Page 36.....	62
Page 37.....	64
Page 38.....	66
Page 39.....	67
Page 40.....	68
Page 41.....	70
Page 42.....	71
Page 43.....	72
Page 44.....	74
Page 45.....	75
Page 46.....	76
Page 47.....	77
Page 48.....	78

Page 49.....	80
Page 50.....	81
Page 51.....	83
Page 52.....	84

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
I SEE MY FATHER TAKING THE TIDE AND AM CARRIED ON IT MYSELF		1
CHAPTER XL		12
CHAPTER XLI		16
CHAPTER XLII		26
CHAPTER XLIII		36
CHAPTER XLIV		45
ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:		52

Page 1

I SEE MY FATHER TAKING THE TIDE AND AM CARRIED ON IT MYSELF

My father stood in the lobby of the Opera, holding a sort of open court, it appeared to me, for a cluster of gentlemen hung round him; and I had presently to bow to greetings which were rather of a kind to flatter me, leading me to presume that he was respected as well as marvelled at. The names of Mr. Serjeant Wedderburn, Mr. Jennings, Lord Alton, Sir Weeton Slater, Mr. Montereiz Williams, Admiral Loftus, the Earl of Wiltlington, were among those which struck my ear, and struck me as good ones. I could not perceive anything of the air of cynical satellites in these gentlemen—on the contrary, they were cordially deferential. I felt that he was encompassed by undoubted gentlemen, and my warmer feelings to my father returned when I became sensible of the pleasant sway he held over the circle, both in speaking and listening. His sympathetic smile and semi-droop of attention; his readiness, when occasion demanded it, to hit the key of the subject and help it on with the right word; his air of unobtrusive appreciation; his sensibility to the moment when the run of conversation depended upon him—showed inimitable art coming of natural genius; and he did not lose a shade of his superior manner the while. Mr. Serjeant Wedderburn, professionally voluble, a lively talker, brimming with anecdote, but too sparkling, too prompt, too full of personal relish of his point, threw my father's urbane supremacy into marked relief; and so in another fashion did the Earl of Wiltlington, 'a youth in the season of guffaws,' as Jorian DeWitt described him, whom a jest would seize by the throat, shaking his sapling frame. Jorian strolled up to us goutily. No efforts of my father's would induce him to illustrate his fame for repartee, so it remained established. 'Very pretty waxwork,' he said to me of our English beauties swimming by. 'Now, those women, young Richmond, if they were inflammable to the fiftieth degree, that is, if they had the fiftieth part of a Frenchwoman in them, would have canvassed society on the great man's account long before this, and sent him to the top like a bubble. He wastes his time on them. That fat woman he's bowing to is Viscountess Sedley, a porcine empress, widow of three, with a soupcon of bigamy to flavour them. She mounted from a grocer's shop, I am told. Constitution has done everything for that woman. So it will everywhere—it beats the world! Now he's on all-fours to Lady Rachel Stokes, our pure aristocracy; she walks as if she were going through a doorway, and couldn't risk an eyelid. I'd like to see her tempting St. Anthony. That's little Wreckham's wife: she's had as many adventures as Gil Blas before he entered the Duke of Lerma's service.' He reviewed several ladies, certainly not very witty when malignant, as I remembered my father to have said of him. 'The style of your Englishwoman

Page 2

is to keep the nose exactly at one elevation, to show you're born to it. They daren't run a gamut, these women. These Englishwomen are a fiction! The model of them is the nursery-miss, but they're like the names of true lovers cut on the bark of a tree—awfully stiff and longitudinal with the advance of time. We've our Lady Jezebels, my boy! They're in the pay of the bishops, or the police, to make vice hideous. The rest do the same for virtue, and get their pay for it somewhere, I don't doubt; perhaps from the newspapers, to keep up the fiction. I tell you, these Englishwomen have either no life at all in them, or they're nothing but animal life. 'Gad, how they dizen themselves! They've no other use for their fingers. The wealth of this country's frightful!'

Jorian seemed annoyed that he could not excite me to defend my countrywomen; but I had begun to see that there was no necessity for the sanguine to encounter the bilious on their behalf, and was myself inclined to be critical. Besides I was engaged in watching my father, whose bearing toward the ladies he accosted did not dissatisfy my critical taste, though I had repeated fears of seeing him overdo it. He summoned me to an introduction to the Countess Szezedy, a merry little Hungarian dame.

'So,' said she at once, speaking German, 'you are to marry the romantic head, the Princess Ottilia of Eppenwelzen! I know her well. I have met her in Vienna. Schone Seele, and bas bleu! It's just those that are won with a duel. I know Prince Otto too.' She prattled away, and asked me whether the marriage was to take place in the Summer. I was too astounded to answer.

'No date is yet fixed,' my father struck in.

'It's the talk of London,' she said.

Before I could demand explanations of my father with regard to this terrible rumour involving Ottilia, I found myself in the box of the City widow, Lady Sampleman, a grievous person, of the complexion of the autumnal bramble-leaf, whose first words were: 'Ah! the young suitor! And how is our German princess?' I had to reply that the theme was more of German princes than princesses in England. 'Oh! but,' said she, 'you are having a—shall I call it—national revenge on them? "I will take one of your princesses," says you; and as soon as said done! I'm dying for a sight of her portrait. Captain DeWitt declares her heavenly—I mean, he says she is fair and nice, quite a lady—that of course! And never mind her not being rich. You can do the decoration to the match. H'm,' she perused my features; 'pale! Lovelorn? Excuse an old friend of your father's. One of his very oldest, I'd say, if it didn't impugn. As such, proud of your alliance. I am. I speak of it everywhere— everywhere.'

Here she dramatized the circulation of the gossip. 'Have you heard the news? No, what? Fitz-George's son marries a princess of the German realm. Indeed! True as

gospel. And how soon? In a month; and now you will see the dear, neglected man command the Court’

Page 3

I looked at my father: I felt stifling with confusion and rage. He leant over to her, imparting some ecstatic news about a great lady having determined to call on her to regulate the affairs of an approaching grand Ball, and under cover of this we escaped.

'If it were not,' said he, 'for the Chassediane—you are aware, Richie, poor Jorian is lost to her?—he has fallen at her quicksilver feet. She is now in London. Half the poor fellow's income expended in bouquets! Her portrait, in the character of the widow Lefourbe, has become a part of his dressing apparatus; he shaves fronting her playbill. His first real affaire de coeur, and he is forty-five! So he is taken in the stomach. That is why love is such a dangerous malady for middle age. As I said, but for Jenny Chassediane, our Sampleman would be the fortune for Jorian. I have hinted it on both sides. Women, Richie, are cleverer than the illustrious Lord Nelson in not seeing what their inclinations decline to see, and Jorian would do me any service in the world except that one. You are restless, my son?'

I begged permission to quit the house, and wait for him outside. He, in return, begged me most urgently to allow myself to be introduced to Lady Edbury, the stepmother of Lord Destrier, now Marquis of Edbury; and, using conversational pressure, he adjured me not to slight this lady, adding, with more significance than the words conveyed, 'I am taking the tide, Richie.' The tide took me, and I bowed to a lady of impressive languor, pale and young, with pleasant manners, showing her character in outline, like a glove on the hand, but little of its quality. She accused my father of coming direct from 'that person's' box. He replied that he never forsook old friends. 'You should,' was her rejoinder. It suggested to me an image of one of the sister Fates cutting a thread.

My heart sank when, from Lady Edbury too, I heard the allusion to Germany and its princess. 'Some one told me she was dark?'

'Blonde,' my father corrected the report.

Lady Edbury 'thought it singular for a German woman of the Blood to be a brunette. They had not much dark mixture among them, particularly in the North. Her name? She had forgotten the name of the princess.'

My father repeated: 'The Princess Ottilia, Princess of Eppenwelzen-Sarkeld.'

'Brunette, you say?'

'The purest blonde.'

'A complexion?'

'A complexion to dazzle the righteous!'

Lady Edbury threw a flying glance in a mirror: 'The unrighteous you leave to us then?'

They bandied the weariful shuttlecock of gallantry. I bowed and fled. My excuse was that I had seen Anna Penrhys in an upper tier of boxes, and I made my way to her, doubting how I should be welcomed. 'The happy woman is a German princess, we hear!' she set me shivering. Her welcome was perfectly unreserved and friendly.

Page 4

She asked the name of the lady whose box I had quitted, and after bending her opera-glass on it for a moment, said, with a certain air of satisfaction, 'She is young'; which led me to guess that Lady Edbury was reputed to be Anna's successor; but why the latter should be flattered by the former's youth was one of the mysteries for me then. Her aunt was awakened from sleep by the mention of my name. 'Is the man here?' she exclaimed, starting. Anna smiled, and talked to me of my father, saying, that she was glad to see me at his right hand, for he had a hard battle to fight. She spoke of him with affectionate interest in his fortunes; no better proof of his generosity as well as hers could have been given me. I promised her heartily I would not be guilty of letting our intimacy drop, and handed the ladies down to the crush-room, where I saw my father leading Lady Edbury to her carriage, much observed. Destrier, the young marquis, coming in to meet the procession from other haunts, linked his arm to his friend Witlington's, and said something in my hearing of old 'Duke Fitz,' which provoked, I fancied, signs of amusement equivalent to tittering in a small ring of the select assembly. Lady Sampleman's carriage was called. 'Another victim,' said a voice. Anna Penrhys walked straight out to find her footman and carriage for herself.

I stood alone in the street, wondering, fretting, filled with a variety of ugly sensations, when my father joined me humming an air of the opera. 'I was looking for Jorian, Richie. He had our Sampleman under his charge. He is off to the Chassediane. Well! And well, Richie, you could not bear the absence from your dada? You find me in full sail on the tide. I am at home, if our fortunes demand it, in a little German principality, but there is,' he threw out his chest, 'a breadth in London; nowhere else do I breathe with absolute freedom—so largely: and this is my battlefield. By the way, Lady Edbury accounts you complete; which is no more to say than that she is a woman of taste. The instance: she positively would not notice that you wear a dress-coat of a foreign cut. Correct it to-morrow; my tailor shall wait on you. I meant to point out to you that when a London woman has not taken note of that, the face and the man have made the right impression on her. Richie, dear boy, how shall I speak the delight I have in seeing you! My arm in yours, old Richie! strolling home from the Fashion: this seems to me what I dreamt of! All in sound health at the Grange? She too, the best of women?'

'I have come on very particular business,' I interposed briefly.

He replied, 'I am alive to you, Richie; speak.'

'The squire has seen my bankers' book. He thinks I've been drawing rather wildly: no doubt he's right. He wants some sort of explanation. He consents to an interview with you. I have come to ask you to go down to him, sir.'

Page 5

'To-morrow morning, without an hour's delay, my dear boy. Very agreeable will be the sight of old Riversley. And in the daylight!'

'He prefers to meet you at Bulsted. Captain Bulsted offers his house for the purpose. I have to warn you, sir, that we stand in a very exceptional position. The squire insists upon having a full account of the money rendered to him.'

'I invite him to London, Richie. I refer him to Dettermain and Newson. I request him to compute the value of a princess.'

'You are aware that he will not come to your invitation.'

'Tell me, then, how is he to understand what I have established by the expenditure, my son? I refer him to Dettermain and Newson.'

'But you must know that he sets his face against legal proceedings involving exposure.'

'But surely, Richie, exposure is the very thing we court. The innocent, the unjustly treated, court it. We would be talked about; you shall hear of us! And into the bargain an hereditary princess. Upon my faith, Mr. Beltham, I think you have mighty little to complain of.'

My temper was beginning to chafe at the curb. 'As regards any feeling about the money, personally, sir, you know I have none. But I must speak of one thing. I have heard to-night, I confess with as much astonishment as grief, the name . . . I could not have guessed that I should hear the princess's name associated with mine, and quite openly.'

'As a matter of course.' He nodded, and struck out a hand in wavy motion.

'Well, sir, if you can't feel for her or her family, be good enough to think of me, and remember that I object to it.'

'For you all,' said he, buoyantly; 'I feel for you all, and I will act for you all. I bring the princess to your arms, my dear boy. You have written me word that the squire gives her a royal dowry—have you not? My combinations permit of no escape to any one of you. Nay, 'tis done. I think for you—I feel for you—I act for you. By heaven, you shall be happy! Sigh, Richie, sigh; your destiny is now entrusted to me!'

'I daresay I'm wasting my breath, sir, but I protest against false pretences. You know well that you have made use of the princess's name for your own purposes.'

'Most indubitably, Richie, I have; and are they not yours? I must have social authority to succeed in our main enterprise. Possibly the princess's name serves for a temporary chandelier to cast light on us. She belongs to us. For her sake, we are bringing the

house she enters into order. Thus, Richie, I could tell Mr. Beltham: you and he supply the money, the princess the name, and I the energy, the skilfulness, and the estimable cause. I pay the princess for the use of her name with the dowry, which is royal; I pay you with the princess, who is royal too; and I, Richie, am paid by your happiness most royally. Together, it is past contest that

Page 6

we win.—Here, my little one,’ he said to a woman, and dropped a piece of gold into her hand, ‘on condition that you go straight home.’ The woman thanked him and promised. ‘As I was observing, we are in the very tide of success. Curious! I have a slight inclination to melancholy. Success, quotha? Why, hundreds before us have paced the identical way homeward at night under these lamps between the mansions and the park. The bare thought makes them resemble a double line of undertakers. The tomb is down there at the end of them—costly or not. At the age of four, on my birthday, I was informed that my mother lay dead in her bed. I remember to this day my astonishment at her not moving. “Her heart is broken,” my old nurse said. To me she appeared intact. Her sister took possession of me, and of her papers, and the wedding-ring—now in the custody of Dettermain and Newson—together with the portraits of both my parents; and she, poor soul, to sustain me, as I verily believe—she had a great idea of my never asking unprofitably for anything in life—bartered the most corroborative of the testificatory documents, which would now make the establishment of my case a comparatively light task. Have I never spoken to you of my boyhood? My maternal uncle was a singing-master and master of elocution. I am indebted to him for the cultivation of my voice. He taught me an effective delivery of my sentences. The English of a book of his called *The Speaker* is still to my mind a model of elegance. Remittances of money came to him from an unknown quarter; and, with a break or two, have come ever since up to this period. My old nurse—heaven bless her—resumed the occupation of washing. I have stood by her tub, Richie, blowing bubbles and listening to her prophecies of my exalted fortune for hours. On my honour, I doubt, I seriously doubt, if I have ever been happier. I depend just now—I have to avow it to you—slightly upon stimulants . . . of a perfectly innocuous character. Mrs. Waddy will allow me a pint of champagne. The truth is, Richie—you see these two or three poor pensioners of mine, honi soit qui mal y pense—my mother has had hard names thrown at her. The stones of these streets cry out to me to have her vindicated. I am not tired; but I want my wine.’

He repeated several times before he reached his housedoor, that he wanted his wine, in a manner to be almost alarming. His unwonted effort of memory, the singular pictures of him which it had flashed before me, and a sort of impatient compassion, made me forget my wrath. I saw him take his restorative at one draught. He lay down on a sofa, and his valet drew his boots off and threw a cloak over him. Lying there, he wished me gaily good-night. Mrs. Waddy told me that he had adopted this system of sleeping for the last month. ‘Bless you, as many people call on him at night now as in the day,’ she said; and I was induced to suppose

Page 7

he had some connection with the Press. She had implicit faith in his powers of constitution, and would affirm, that he had been the death of dozens whom the attraction had duped to imitate his habits. 'He is now a Field-Marshal on his campaign.' She betrayed a twinkle of humour. He must himself have favoured her with that remark. The report of the house-door frequently shutting in the night suggested the passage of his aides-de-camp.

Early in the morning, I found him pacing through the open doors of the dining-room and the library dictating to a secretary at a desk, now and then tossing a word to Dettermain and Newson's chief clerk. The floor was strewn with journals. He wore Hessian boots; a voluminous black cloak hung loosely from his shoulders.

'I am just settling the evening papers,' he said after greeting me, with a show of formality in his warmth; and immediately added, 'That will do, Mr. Jopson. Put in a note—" Mr. Harry Lepel Richmond of Riversley and Twn-y-glas, my son, takes no step to official distinction in his native land save through the ordinary Parliamentary channels." Your pardon, Richie; presently. I am replying to a morning paper.'

'What's this? Why print my name?' I cried.

'Merely the correction of an error. I have to insist, my dear boy, that you claim no privileges: you are apart from them. Mr. Jopson, I beseech you, not a minute's delay in delivering that. Fetch me from the printer's my pamphlet this afternoon. Mr. Jacobs, my compliments to Dettermain and Newson: I request them to open proceedings instanter, and let the world know of it. Good-morning, gentlemen.'

And now, turning to me, my father fenced me with the whole weight of his sententious volubility, which was the force of a river. Why did my name appear in the papers? Because I was his son. But he assured me that he carefully separated me from public companionship with his fortunes, and placed me on the side of my grandfather, as a plain gentleman of England, the heir of the most colossal wealth possible in the country.

'I dis-sociate you from me, Richie, do you see? I cause it to be declared that you need, on no account, lean on me. Jopson will bring you my pamphlet—my Declaration of Rights—to peruse. In the Press, in Literature, at Law, and on social ground, I meet the enemy, and I claim my own; by heaven, I do! And I will down to the squire for a distraction, if you esteem it necessary, certainly. Half-a-dozen words to him. Why, do you maintain him to be insensible to a title for you? No, no. And ask my friends. I refer him to any dozen of my friends to convince him I have the prize almost in my possession. Why, dear boy, I have witnesses, living witnesses, to the ceremony. Am I, tell me, to be deprived of money now, once again, for the eleventh time? Oh! And put aside my duty to you, I protest I am bound in duty to her who bore me—you have seen

her miniature: how lovely that dear woman was! how gentle!—bound in duty to her to clear her good name. This does not affect you . . . ’

Page 8

'Oh, but it does,' he allowed me to plead.

'Ay, through your love for your dada.'

He shook me by both hands. I was touched with pity, and at the same time in doubt whether it was not an actor that swayed me; for I was discontented, and could not speak my discontent; I was overborne, overflowed. His evasion of the matter of my objections relating to the princess I felt to be a palpable piece of artfulness, but I had to acknowledge to myself that I knew what his argument would be, and how overwhelmingly his defence of it would spring forth. My cowardice shrank from provoking a recurrence to the theme. In fact, I submitted consciously to his masterful fluency and emotional power, and so I was carried on the tide with him, remaining in London several days to witness that I was not the only one. My father, admitting that money served him in his conquest of society, and defying any other man to do as much with it as he did, replied to a desperate insinuation of mine, 'This money I spend I am actually putting out to interest as much as, or more than, your grandad.' He murmured confidentially, 'I have alarmed the Government. Indeed, I have warrant for saying I am in communication with its agents. They are bribing me; they are positively bribing me, Richie. I receive my stipend annually. They are mighty discreet. So am I. But I push them hard. I take what they offer: I renounce none of my claims.'

Janet wrote that it would be prudent for me to return.

'I am prepared,' my father said. 'I have only to meet Mr. Beltham in a room—I stipulate that it shall be between square walls—to win him. The squire to back us, Richie, we have command of the entire world. His wealth, and my good cause, and your illustrious union—by the way, it is announced definitely in this morning's paper.'

Dismayed, I asked what was announced.

'Read,' said he. 'This will be something to hand to Mr. Beltham at our meeting. I might trace it to one of the embassies, Imperial or Royal. No matter—there it is.'

I read a paragraph in which Ottilia's name and titles were set down; then followed mine and my wealthy heirship, and—woe was me in the perusing of it!—a roundabout vindication of me as one not likely to be ranked as the first of English commoners who had gained the hand of an hereditary foreign princess, though it was undoubtedly in the light of a commoner that I was most open to the congratulations of my countrymen upon my unparalleled felicity. A display of historical erudition cited the noble inferiors by birth who had caught princesses to their arms—Charles, Humphrey, William, John. Under this list, a later Harry!

The paragraph closed by fixing the nuptials to take place before the end of the Season.

I looked at my father to try a struggle with him. The whole man was efflorescent.

'Can't it be stopped?' I implored him.

Page 9

He signified the impossibility in a burst of gesticulations, motions of the mouth, smiling frowns; various patterns of an absolute negative beating down opposition.

'Things printed can never be stopped, Richie. Our Jorian compares them to babies baptized. They have a soul from that moment, and go on for ever!—an admirable word of Jorian's. And a word to you, Richie. Will you swear to me by the veracity of your lover's heart, that paragraph affords you no satisfaction? He cannot swear it!' my father exclaimed, seeing me swing my shoulder round, and he made me feel that it would have been a false oath if I had sworn it. But I could have sworn, that I had rather we two were at the bottom of the sea than that it should come under the princess's eyes. I read it again. It was in print. It looked like reality. It was at least the realization of my dream. But this played traitor and accused me of being crowned with no more than a dream. The sole practical thing I could do was to insist on our starting for Riversley immediately, to make sure of my own position. 'Name your hour, Richie,' my father said confidently: and we waited.

A rather plainer view of my father's position, as I inclined to think, was afforded to me one morning at his breakfast-table, by a conversation between him and Jorian DeWitt, who brought me a twisted pink note from Mdlle. Chassediane, the which he delivered with the air of a dog made to disgorge a bone, and he was very cool to me indeed. The cutlets of Alphonse were subject to snappish criticism. 'I assume,' he said, 'the fellow knew I was coming?'

'He saw it in my handwriting of yesterday,' replied my father. 'But be just to him, acknowledge that he is one of the few that perform their daily duties with a tender conscience.'

'This English climate has bedevilled the fellow! He peppers his dishes like a mongrel Indian reared on mangoes.'

'Ring him up, ring him up, Jorian. All I beg of you is not to disgust him with life, for he quits any service in the world to come to me, and, in fact, he suits me.'

'Exactly so: you spoil him.'

My father shrugged. 'The state of the case is, that your stomach is growing delicate, friend Jorian.'

'The actual state of the case being, that my palate was never keener, and consequently my stomach knows its business.'

'You should have tried the cold turbot with oil and capers.'

'Your man had better stick to buttered eggs, in my opinion.'

‘Say, porridge!’

‘No, I’ll be hanged if I think he’s equal to a bowl of porridge.’

‘Careme might have confessed to the same!’

‘With this difference,’ cried Jorian in a heat, ‘that he would never have allowed the thought of any of your barbarous messes to occur to a man at table. Let me tell you, Roy, you astonish me: up till now I have never known you guilty of the bad taste of defending a bad dish on your own board.’



Page 10

'Then you will the more readily pardon me, Jorian.'

'Oh, I pardon you,' Jorian sneered, tripped to the carpet by such ignoble mildness. 'A breakfast is no great loss.'

My father assured him he would have a serious conversation with Alphonse, for whom he apologized by saying that Alphonse had not, to his knowledge, served as hospital cook anywhere, and was therefore quite possibly not sufficiently solicitous for appetites and digestions of invalids.

Jorian threw back his head as though to discharge a spiteful sarcasm with good aim; but turning to me, said, 'Harry, the thing must be done; your father must marry. Notoriety is the season for a pick and choice of the wealthiest and the loveliest. I refuse to act the part of warming-pan any longer; I refuse point blank. It's not a personal feeling on my part; my advice is that of a disinterested friend, and I tell you candidly, Roy, set aside the absurd exhibition of my dancing attendance on that last rose of Guildhall,—egad, the alderman went like Summer, and left us the very picture of a fruity Autumn,—I say you can't keep her hanging on the tree of fond expectation for ever. She'll drop.'

'Catch her, Jorian; you are on guard.'

'Upwards of three hundred thousand, if a penny, Roy Richmond! Who? I? I am not a fortune-hunter.'

'Nor am I, friend Jorian.'

'No, it 's because you're not thorough: you 'll fall between the stools.'

My father remarked that he should visit this upon Mr. Alphonse.

'You shook off that fine Welsh girl, and she was in your hand—the act of a madman!' Jorian continued. 'You're getting older: the day will come when you're a flat excitement. You know the first Lady Edbury spoilt one of your best chances when you had the market. Now you're trifling with the second. She's the head of the Light Brigade, but you might fix her down, if she's not too much in debt. You 're not at the end of your run, I dare say. Only, my good Roy, let me tell you, in life you mustn't wait for the prize of the race till you touch the goal—if you prefer metaphor. You generally come forward about every seven years or so. Add on another seven, and women'll begin to think. You can't beat Time, mon Roy.'

'So,' said my father, 'I touch the goal, and women begin to think, and I can't beat time to them. Jorian, your mind is in a state of confusion. I do not marry.'

'Then, Roy Richmond, hear what a friend says . . .'

'I do not marry, Jorian, and you know my reasons.'

'Sentiments!'

'They are a part of my life.'

Page 11

'Just as I remarked, you are not thorough. You have genius and courage out of proportion, and you are a dead failure, Roy; because, no sooner have you got all Covent Garden before you for the fourth or fifth time, than in go your hands into your pockets, and you say—No, there's an apple I can't have, so I'll none of these; and, by the way, the apple must be tolerably withered by this time. And you know perfectly well (for you don't lack common sense at a shaking, Roy Richmond), that you're guilty of simple madness in refusing to make the best of your situation. You haven't to be taught what money means. With money—and a wife to take care of it, mind you—you are pre-eminently the man for which you want to be recognized. Without it—Harry 'll excuse me, I must speak plainly—you're a sort of a spectacle of a bob-cherry, down on your luck, up on your luck, and getting dead stale and never bitten; a familiar curiosity'

Jorian added, 'Oh, by Jove! it's not nice to think of.' My father said: 'Harry, I am sure, will excuse you for talking, in your extreme friendliness, of matters that he and I have not—and they interest us deeply—yet thought fit to discuss. And you may take my word for it, Jorian, that I will give Alphonse his medical dose. I am quite of your opinion that the kings of cooks require it occasionally. Harry will inform us of Mdlle. Chassediane's commands.'

The contents of the letter permitted me to read it aloud. She desired to know how she could be amused on the Sunday.

'We will undertake it,' said my father. 'I depute the arrangements to you, Jorian. Respect the prejudices, and avoid collisions, that is all.'

Captain DeWitt became by convenient stages cheerful, after the pink slip of paper had been made common property, and from a seriously-advising friend, in his state of spite, relapsed to the idle and shadow-like associate, when pleased. I had to thank him for the gift of fresh perceptions. Surely it would be as well if my father could get a woman of fortune to take care of him!

We had at my request a consultation with Dettermain and Newson on the eve of the journey to Riversley, Temple and Jorian DeWitt assisting. Strange documentary evidence was unfolded and compared with the date of a royal decree: affidavits of persons now dead; a ring, the ring; fans, and lace, and handkerchiefs with notable initials; jewelry stamped 'To the Divine Anastasia' from an adoring Christian name: old brown letters that shrieked 'wife' when 'charmer' seemed to have palled; oaths of fidelity ran through them like bass notes. Jorian held up the discoloured sheets of ancient paper saying:

Page 12

'Here you behold the mummy of the villain Love.' Such love as it was—the love of the privileged butcher for the lamb. The burden of the letters, put in epigram, was rattlesnake and bird. A narrative of Anastasia's sister, Elizabeth, signed and sealed, with names of witnesses appended, related in brief bald English the history of the events which had killed her. It warmed pathetically when dwelling on the writer's necessity to part with letters and papers of greater moment, that she might be enabled to sustain and educate her sister's child. She named the certificate; she swore to the tampering with witnesses. The number and exact indication of the house where the ceremony took place was stated—a house in Soho;—the date was given, and the incident on that night of the rape of the beautiful Miss Armett by mad Lord Beaumaris at the theatre doors, aided by masked ruffians, after Anastasia's performance of Zamira.

'There are witnesses I know to be still living, Mr. Temple,' my father said, seeing the young student-at-law silent and observant. 'One of them I have under my hand; I feed him. Listen to this.'

He read two or three insufferable sentences from one of the love-epistles, and broke down. I was ushered aside by a member of the firm to inspect an instrument prepared to bind me as surety for the costs of the appeal. I signed it. We quitted the attorney's office convinced (I speak of Temple and myself) that we had seen the shadow of something.

CHAPTER XL

MY FATHER'S MEETING WITH MY GRANDFATHER

My father's pleasure on the day of our journey to Bulsted was to drive me out of London on a lofty open chariot, with which he made the circuit of the fashionable districts, and caused innumerable heads to turn. I would have preferred to go the way of other men, to be unnoticed, but I was subject to an occasional glowing of undefined satisfaction in the observance of the universally acknowledged harmony existing between his pretensions, his tastes and habits, and his person. He contrived by I know not what persuasiveness and simplicity of manner and speech to banish from me the idea that he was engaged in playing a high stake; and though I knew it, and he more than once admitted it, there was an ease and mastery about him that afforded me some degree of positive comfort still. I was still most securely attached to his fortunes. Supposing the ghost of dead Hector to have hung over his body when the inflamed son of Peleus whirled him at his chariot wheels round Troy, he would, with his natural passions sobered by Erebus, have had some of my reflections upon force and fate, and my partial sense of exhilaration in the tremendous speed of the course during the whole of the period my father termed his Grand Parade. I showed just such acquiescence or resistance as were superinduced by the variations of the ground. Otherwise I was spell-

bound; and beyond interdicting any further public mention of my name or the princess's, I did nothing to thwart him. It would have been no light matter.

Page 13

We struck a station at a point half-way down to Bulsted, and found little Kiomi there, thunder in her brows, carrying a bundle, and purchasing a railway-ticket, not to travel in our direction. She gave me the singular answer that she could not tell me where her people were; nor would she tell me whither she was going, alone, and by rail. I chanced to speak of Heriot. One of her sheet-lightning flashes shot out. 'He won't be at Bulsted,' she said, as if that had a significance. I let her know we were invited to Bulsted. 'Oh, she 's at home'; Kiomi blinked, and her features twitched like whip-cord. I saw that she was possessed by one of her furies. That girl's face had the art of making me forget beautiful women, and what beauty was by comparison.

It happened that the squire came across us as we were rounding the slope of larch and fir plantation near a part of the Riversley hollows, leading to the upper heath-land, where, behind a semicircle of birches, Bulsted lay. He was on horseback, and called hoarsely to the captain's coachman, who was driving us, to pull up. 'Here, Harry,' he sang out to me, in the same rough voice, 'I don't see why we should bother Captain William. It's a bit of business, not pleasure. I've got the book in my pocket. You ask—is it convenient to step into my bailiff's cottage hard by, and run through it? Ten minutes 'll tell me all I want to know. I want it done with. Ask.'

My father stood up and bowed, bareheaded.

My grandfather struck his hat and bobbed.

'Mr. Beltham, I trust I see you well.'

'Better, sir, when I've got rid of a damned unpleasant bit o' business.'

'I offer you my hearty assistance.'

'Do you? Then step down and come into my bailiff's.'

'I come, sir.'

My father alighted from the carriage. The squire cast his gouty leg to be quit of his horse, but not in time to check my father's advances and ejaculations of condolence.

'Gout, Mr. Beltham, is a little too much a proof to us of a long line of ancestry.'

His hand and arm were raised in the form of a splint to support the squire, who glared back over his cheekbone, horrified that he could not escape the contact, and in too great pain from arthritic throes to protest: he resembled a burglar surprised by justice. 'What infernal nonsense . . . , fellow talking now?' I heard him mutter between his hoppings and dancings, with one foot in the stirrup and a toe to earth, the enemy at his heel, and his inclination half bent upon swinging to the saddle again.

I went to relieve him. ‘Damn! . . . Oh, it’s you,’ said he.

Page 14

The squire directed Uberly, acting as his groom, to walk his horse up and down the turf fronting young Tom Eckerthy's cottage, and me to remain where I was; then hobbled up to the door, followed at a leisurely march by my father. The door opened. My father swept the old man in before him, with a bow and flourish that admitted of no contradiction, and the door closed on them. I caught a glimpse of Uberly screwing his wrinkles in a queer grimace, while he worked his left eye and thumb expressively at the cottage, by way of communicating his mind to Samuel, Captain Bulsted's coachman; and I became quite of his opinion as to the nature of the meeting, that it was comical and not likely to lead to much. I thought of the princess and of my hope of her depending upon such an interview as this. From that hour when I stepped on the sands of the Continent to the day of my quitting them, I had been folded in a dream: I had stretched my hands to the highest things of earth, and here now was the retributive material money-question, like a keen scythe-blade!

The cottage-door continued shut. The heaths were darkening. I heard a noise of wheels, and presently the unmistakable voice of Janet saying, 'That must be Harry.' She was driving my aunt Dorothy. Both of them hushed at hearing that the momentous duel was in progress. Janet's first thought was of the squire. 'I won't have him ride home in the dark,' she said, and ordered Uberly to walk the horse home. The ladies had a ladies' altercation before Janet would permit my aunt to yield her place and proceed on foot, accompanied by me. Naturally the best driver of the two kept the whip. I told Samuel to go on to Bulsted, with word that we were coming: and Janet, nodding bluntly, agreed to direct my father as to where he might expect to find me on the Riversley road. My aunt Dorothy and I went ahead slowly: at her request I struck a pathway to avoid the pony-carriage, which was soon audible; and when Janet, chattering to the squire, had gone by, we turned back to intercept my father. He was speechless at the sight of Dorothy Beltham. At his solicitation, she consented to meet him next day; his account of the result of the interview was unintelligible to her as well as to me. Even after leaving her at the park-gates, I could get nothing definite from him, save that all was well, and that the squire was eminently practical; but he believed he had done an excellent evening's work. 'Yes,' said he, rubbing his hands, 'excellent! making due allowances for the emphatically commoner's mind we have to deal with.' And then to change the subject he dilated on that strange story of the man who, an enormous number of years back in the date of the world's history, carried his little son on his shoulders one night when the winds were not so boisterous, though we were deeper in Winter, along the identical road we traversed, between the gorse-mounds, across the heaths, with yonder remembered fir-tree clump in sight and the waste-water visible to footfarers rounding under the firs. At night-time he vowed, that as far as nature permitted it, he had satisfied the squire—'completely satisfied him, I mean,' he said, to give me sound sleep. 'No doubt of it; no doubt of it, Richie.'

Page 15

He won Julia's heart straight off, and Captain Bulsted's profound admiration. 'Now I know the man I've always been adoring since you were so high, Harry,' said she. Captain Bulsted sighed: 'Your husband bows to your high good taste, my dear.' They relished him sincerely, and between them and him I suffered myself to be dandled once more into a state of credulity, until I saw my aunt Dorothy in the afternoon subsequent to the appointed meeting. His deep respect and esteem for her had stayed him from answering any of her questions falsely. To that extent he had been veracious. It appeared, that driven hard by the squire, who would have no waving of flags and lighting of fireworks in a matter of business, and whose 'commoner's mind' chafed sturdily at a hint of the necessity for lavish outlays where there was a princess to win, he had rallied on the fiction that many of the cheques, standing for the bulk of the sums expended, were moneys borrowed by him of me, which he designed to repay, and was prepared to repay instantly—could in fact, the squire demanding it, repay, as it were, on the spot; for behold, these borrowed moneys were not spent; they were moneys invested in undertakings, put out to high rates of interest; moneys that perhaps it would not be adviseable to call in without a season of delay; still, if Mr. Beltham, acting for his grandson and heir, insisted, it should be done. The moneys had been borrowed purely to invest them with profit on my behalf: a gentleman's word of honour was pledged to it.

The squire grimly gave him a couple of months to make it good.

Dorothy Beltham and my father were together for about an hour at Eckerthy's farm. She let my father kiss her hand when he was bending to take his farewell of her, but held her face away. He was in manifest distress, hardly master of his voice, begged me to come to him soon, and bowing, with 'God bless you, madam, my friend on earth!' turned his heel, bearing his elastic frame lamentably. A sad or a culprit air did not befit him: one reckoned up his foibles and errors when seeing him under a partly beaten aspect. At least, I did; not my dear aunt, who was compassionate of him, however thoroughly she condemned his ruinous extravagance, and the shifts and evasions it put him to. She feared, that instead of mending the difficulty, he had postponed merely to exaggerate it in the squire's mind; and she was now of opinion that the bringing him down to meet the squire was very bad policy, likely to result in danger to my happiness; for, if the money should not be forthcoming on the date named, all my father's faults would be transferred to me as his accomplice, both in the original wastefulness and the subterfuges invented to conceal it. I recollected that a sum of money had really been sunk in Prince Ernest's coal-mine. My aunt said she hoped for the best.

Page 16

Mounting the heaths, we looked back on the long yellow road, where the carriage conveying my father to the railway-station was visible, and talked of him, and of the elements of antique tragedy in his history, which were at that period, let me say, precisely what my incessant mental efforts were strained to expel from the idea of our human life. The individual's freedom was my tenet of faith; but pity pleaded for him that he was well-nigh irresponsible, was shamefully sinned against at his birth, one who could charge the Gods with vindictiveness, and complain of the persecution of natal Furies. My aunt Dorothy advised me to take him under my charge, and sell his house and furniture, make him live in bachelor chambers with his faithful waiting-woman and a single manservant.

'He will want money even to do that,' I remarked.

She murmured, 'Is there not some annual income paid to him?'

Her quick delicacy made her redden in alluding so closely to his personal affairs, and I loved her for the nice feeling. 'It was not much,' I said. The miserable attempt to repair the wrongs done to him with this small annuity angered me—and I remembered, little pleased, the foolish expectations he founded on this secret acknowledgement of the justice of his claims. 'We won't talk of it,' I pursued. 'I wish he had never touched it. I shall interdict him.'

'You would let him pay his debts with it, Harry?'

'I am not sure, aunty, that he does not incur a greater debt by accepting it.'

'One's wish would be, that he might not ever be in need of it.'

'Ay, or never be caring to find the key of it.'

'That must be waste of time,' she said.

I meant something else, but it was useless to tell her so.

CHAPTER XLI

Commencement of the splendours and perplexities of my father's grand Parade

Janet, in reply to our inquiries as to the condition of the squire's temper, pointed out in the newspaper a notification of a grand public Ball to be given by my father, the first of a series of three, and said that the squire had seen it and shrugged. She thought there was no positive cause for alarm, even though my father should fail of his word; but expressed her view decidedly, that it was an unfortunate move to bring him between the

squire and me, and so she blamed Captain Bulsted. This was partly for the reason that the captain and his wife, charmed by my father, were for advocating his merits at the squire's table: our ingenuity was ludicrously taxed to mystify him on the subject of their extravagant eulogies. They told him they had been invited, and were going to the great London Balls.

'Subscription Balls?' asked the squire.

'No, sir,' rejoined the captain.

'Tradesmen's Balls, d' ye call 'em, then?'

Page 17

'No, sir; they are Balls given by a distinguished gentleman.'

'Take care it's not another name for tradesmen's Balls, William.'

'I do not attend tradesmen's Balls, sir.'

'Take care o' that, William.'

The captain was very angry. 'What,' said he, turning to us, 'what does the squire mean by telling an officer of the Royal Navy that he is conducting his wife to a tradesmen's Ball?'

Julia threatened malicious doings for the insult. She and the squire had a controversy upon the explication of the word gentleman, she describing my father's appearance and manners to the life. 'Now listen to me, squire. A gentleman, I say, is one you'd say, if he wasn't born a duke, he ought to have been, and more shame to the title! He turns the key of a lady's heart with a twinkle of his eye. He 's never mean—what he has is yours. He's a true friend; and if he doesn't keep his word, you know in a jiffy it's the fault of affairs; and stands about five feet eleven: he's a full-blown man': and so forth.

The squire listened, and perspired at finding the object of his abhorrence crowned thus in the unassailable realms of the abstract. Julia might have done it more elegantly; but her husband was rapturous over her skill in portraiture, and he added: 'That's a gentleman, squire; and that 's a man pretty sure to be abused by half the world.'

'Three-quarters, William,' said the squire; 'there's about the computation for your gentleman's creditors, I suspect.'

'Ay, sir; well,' returned the captain, to whom this kind of fencing in the dark was an affliction, 'we make it up in quality—in quality.'

'I 'll be bound you do,' said the squire; 'and so you will so long as you 're only asked to dance to the other poor devils' fiddling.'

Captain Bulsted bowed. 'The last word to you, squire.'

The squire nodded. 'I 'll hand it to your wife, William.'

Julia took it graciously. 'A perfect gentleman! perfect! confound his enemies!'

'Why, ma'am, you might keep from swearing,' the squire bawled.

'La! squire,' said she, 'why, don't you know the National Anthem?'

'National Anthem, ma'am! and a fellow, a velvet-tongued—confound him, if you like.'

'And where's my last word, if you please?' Julia jumped up, and dropped a provoking curtsey.

'You silly old grandada!' said Janet, going round to him; 'don't you see the cunning woman wants to dress you in our garments, and means to boast of it to us while you're finishing your wine?'

The old man fondled her. I could have done the same, she bent over him with such homely sweetness. 'One comfort, you won't go to these gingerbread Balls,' he said.

'I'm not invited,' she moaned comically.

'No; nor shan't be, while I can keep you out of bad company.'

'But, grandada, I do like dancing.'

Page 18

'Dance away, my dear; I've no objection.'

'But where's the music?'

'Oh, you can always have music.'

'But where are my partners?'

The squire pointed at me.

'You don't want more than one at a time, eh?' He corrected his error: 'No, the fellow's engaged in another quadrille. Mind you, Miss Janet, he shall dance to your tune yet. D'ye hear, sir?' The irritation excited by Captain Bulsted and Julia broke out in fury. 'Who's that fellow danced when Rome was burning?'

'The Emperor Nero,' said Janet. 'He killed Harry's friend Seneca in the eighty-somethingth year of his age; an old man, and—hush, grandada!' She could not check him.

'Hark you, Mr. Harry; dance your hardest up in town with your rips and reps, and the lot of ye; all very fine while the burning goes on: you won't see the fun of dancing on the ashes. A nice king of Rome Nero was next morning! By the Lord, if I couldn't swear you'll be down on your knees to an innocent fresh-hearted girl 's worth five hundred of the crew you're for partnering now while you've a penny for the piper.'

Janet shut his mouth, kissed him, and held his wine up. He drank, and thumped the table. 'We 'll have parties here, too. The girl shall have her choice of partners: she shan't be kept in the background by a young donkey. Take any six of your own age, and six sensible men, to try you by your chances. By George, the whole dozen 'd bring you in non-compos. You've only got the women on your side because of a smart face and figure.'

Janet exclaimed indignantly, 'Grandada, I'm offended with you'; and walked out on a high step.

'Come, if he has the women on his side,' said Captain Bulsted, mildly.

'He'll be able to go partnering and gallopading as long as his banker 'll let him, William—like your gentleman! That's true. We shall soon see.'

'I leave my character in your hands, sir,' said I, rising. 'If you would scold me in private, I should prefer it, on behalf of your guests; but I am bound to submit to your pleasure, and under any circumstances I remember, what you appear to forget, that you are my grandfather.'

So saying, I followed the ladies. It was not the wisest of speeches, and happened, Captain Bulsted informed me, to be delivered in my father's manner, for the squire pronounced emphatically that he saw very little Beltham in me. The right course would have been for me to ask him then and there whether I had his consent to start for Germany. But I was the sport of resentments and apprehensions; and, indeed, I should not have gone. I could not go without some title beyond that of the heir of great riches.

Janet kept out of my sight. I found myself strangely anxious to console her: less sympathetic, perhaps, than desirous to pour out my sympathy in her ear, which was of a very pretty shape, with a soft unpierced lobe. We danced together at the Riversley Ball, given by the squire on the night of my father's Ball in London. Janet complimented me upon having attained wisdom. 'Now we get on well,' she said. 'Grandada only wants to see us friendly, and feel that I am not neglected.'

Page 19

The old man, a martyr to what he considered due to his favourite, endured the horror of the Ball until suppertime, and kept his eyes on us two. He forgot, or pretended to forget, my foreign engagement altogether, though the announcement in the newspapers was spoken of by Sir Roderick and Lady Echester and others.

'How do you like that?' he remarked to me, seeing her twirled away by one of the young Rubreys.

'She seems to like it, sir,' I replied.

'Like it!' said he. 'In my day you wouldn't have caught me letting the bloom be taken off the girl I cared for by a parcel o' scampish young dogs. Right in their arms! Look at her build. She's strong; she's healthy; she goes round like a tower. If you want a girl to look like a princess!'

His eulogies were not undeserved. But she danced as lightly and happily with Mr. Fred Rubrey as with Harry Richmond. I congratulated myself on her lack of sentiment. Later, when in London, where *Mlle. Jenny Chassediane* challenged me to perilous sarabandes, I wished that Janet had ever so small a grain of sentiment, for a preservative to me. Otilia glowed high and distant; she sent me no message; her image did not step between me and disorder. The whole structure of my idea of my superior nature seemed to be crumbling to fragments; and beginning to feel in despair that I was wretchedly like other men, I lost by degrees the sense of my hold on her. It struck me that my worst fears of the effect produced on the princess's mind by that last scene in the lake-palace must be true, and I abandoned hope. Temple thought she tried me too cruelly. Under these circumstances I became less and less resolutely disposed to renew the forlorn conflict with my father concerning his prodigal way of living. 'Let it last as long as I have a penny to support him!' I exclaimed. He said that Dettermain and Newson were now urging on his case with the utmost despatch in order to keep pace with him, but that the case relied for its life on his preserving a great appearance. He handed me his division of our twin cheque-books, telling me he preferred to depend on his son for supplies, and I was in the mood to think this a partial security.

'But you can take what there is,' I said.

'On the contrary, I will accept nothing but minor sums—so to speak, the fractional shillings; though I confess I am always bewildered by silver,' said he.

I questioned him upon his means of carrying on his expenditure. His answer was to refer to the pavement of the city of London. By paving here and there he had, he informed me, made a concrete for the wheels to roll on. He calculated that he now had credit for the space of three new years—ample time for him to fight his fight and win his victory.



'My tradesmen are not like the tradesmen of other persons,' he broke out with a curious neigh of supreme satisfaction in that retinue. 'They believe in me. I have de facto harnessed them to my fortunes; and if you doubt me on the point of success, I refer you to Dettermain and Newson. All I stipulate for is to maintain my position in society to throw a lustre on my Case. So much I must do. My failures hitherto have been entirely owing to the fact that I had not my son to stand by me.'

Page 20

'Then you must have money, sir.'

'Yes, money.'

'Then what can you mean by refusing mine?'

'I admit the necessity for it, my son. Say you hand me a cheque for a temporary thousand. Your credit and mine in conjunction can replace it before the expiration of the two months. Or,' he meditated, 'it might be better to give a bond or so to a professional lender, and preserve the account at your bankers intact. The truth is, I have, in my interview with the squire, drawn in advance upon the, material success I have a perfect justification to anticipate, and I cannot allow the old gentleman to suppose that I retrench for the purpose of giving a large array of figures to your bankers' book. It would be sheer madness. I cannot do it. I cannot afford to do it. When you are on a runaway horse, I prefer to say a racehorse,—Richie, you must ride him. You dare not throw up the reins. Only last night Wedderburn, appealing to Loftus, a practical sailor, was approved when he offered—I forget the subject-matter—the illustration of a ship on a lee-shore; you are lost if you do not spread every inch of canvas to the gale. Retrenchment at this particular moment is perdition. Count our gains, Richie. We have won a princess . . .'

I called to him not to name her.

He persisted: 'Half a minute. She is won; she is ours. And let me, in passing,—bear with me one second—counsel you to write to Prince Ernest instanter, proposing formally for his daughter, and, in your grandfather's name, state her dowry at fifty thousand per annum.'

'Oh, you forget!' I interjected.

'No, Richie, I do not forget that you are off a leeshore; you are mounted on a skittish racehorse, with, if you like, a New Forest fly operating within an inch of his belly-girths. Our situation is so far ticklish, and prompts invention and audacity.'

'You must forget, sir, that in the present state of the squire's mind, I should be simply lying in writing to the prince that he offers a dowry.'

'No, for your grandfather has yielded consent.'

'By implication, you know he withdraws it.'

'But if I satisfy him that you have not been extravagant?'

'I must wait till he is satisfied.'



'The thing is done, Richie, done. I see it in advance—it is done! Whatever befalls me, you, my dear boy, in the space of two months, may grasp—your fortune. Besides, here is my hand. I swear by it, my son, that I shall satisfy the squire. I go farther; I say I shall have the means to refund to you—the means, the money. The marriage is announced in our prints for the Summer—say early June. And I undertake that you, the husband of the princess, shall be the first gentleman in England— that is, Europe. Oh! not ruling a coterie: not dazzling the world with entertainments.' He thought himself in earnest when he said, 'I attach no mighty importance to these things, though

Page 21

there is no harm I can perceive in leading the fashion—none that I see in having a consummate style. I know your taste, and hers, Richie, the noble lady's. She shall govern the intellectual world—your poets, your painters, your men of science. They reflect a beautiful sovereign mistress more exquisitely than almost aristocracy does. But you head our aristocracy also. You are a centre of the political world. So I scheme it. Between you, I defy the Court to rival you. This I call distinction. It is no mean aim, by heaven! I protest, it is an aim with the mark in sight, and not out of range.'

He whipped himself up to one of his oratorical frenzies, of which a cheque was the common fruit. The power of his persuasiveness in speech, backed by the spectacle of his social accomplishments, continued to subdue me, and I protested only inwardly even when I knew that he was gambling with fortune. I wrote out many cheques, and still it appeared to me that they were barely sufficient to meet the current expenses of his household. Temple and I calculated that his Grand Parade would try the income of a duke, and could but be a matter of months. Mention of it reached Riversley from various quarters, from Lady Maria Higginson, from Captain Bulsted and his wife, and from Sir Roderick Ilchester, who said to me, with fine accentuation, 'I have met your father.' Sir Roderick, an Englishman reputed of good breeding, informed the son that he had actually met the father in lofty society, at Viscountess Sedley's, at Lady Dolchester's, at Bramham DeWitt's, and heard of him as a frequenter of the Prussian and Austrian Embassy entertainments; and also that he was admitted to the exclusive dinner-parties of the Countess de Strode, 'which are,' he observed, in the moderated tone of an astonishment devoting itself to propagation, 'the cream of society.' Indubitably, then, my father was an impostor: more Society proved it. The squire listened like one pelted by a storm, sure of his day to come at the close of the two months. I gained his commendation by shunning the metropolitan Balls, nor did my father press me to appear at them. It was tacitly understood between us that I should now and then support him at his dinner-table, and pass bowing among the most select of his great ladies. And this I did, and I felt at home with them, though I had to bear with roughnesses from one or two of the more venerable dames, which were not quite proper to good breeding. Old Lady Kane, great-aunt of the Marquis of Edbury, was particularly my tormentor, through her plain-spoken comments on my father's legal suit; for I had to listen to her without wincing, and agree in her general contempt of the Georges, and foil her queries coolly, when I should have liked to perform Jorian DeWitt's expressed wish to 'squeeze the acid out of her in one grip, and toss her to the Gods that collect exhausted lemons.' She took extraordinary liberties with me.

Page 22

'Why not marry an Englishwoman? Rich young men ought to choose wives from their own people, out of their own sets. Foreign women never get on well in this country, unless they join the hounds to hunt the husband.'

She cited naturalized ladies famous for the pastime. Her world and its outskirts she knew thoroughly, even to the fact of my grandfather's desire that I should marry Janet Ilchester. She named a duke's daughter, an earl's. Of course I should have to stop the scandal: otherwise the choice I had was unrestricted. My father she evidently disliked, but she just as much disliked an encounter with his invincible bonhomie and dexterous tongue. She hinted at family reasons for being shy of him, assuring me that I was not implicated in them.

'The Guelph pattern was never much to my taste,' she said, and it consoled me with the thought that he was not ranked as an adventurer in the houses he entered. I learned that he was supposed to depend chiefly on my vast resources. Edbury acted the part of informant to the inquisitive harridan: 'Her poor dear good-for-nothing Edbury! whose only cure would be a nice, well-conducted girl, an heiress.' She had cast her eye on Anna Penrhys, but considered her antecedents doubtful. Spotless innocence was the sole receipt for Edbury's malady. My father, in a fit of bold irony, proposed Lady Kane for President of his Tattle and Scandal Club,—a club of ladies dotted with select gentlemen, the idea of which Jorian DeWitt claimed the merit of starting, and my father surrendered it to him, with the reservation, that Jorian intended an association of backbiters pledged to reveal all they knew, whereas the Club, in its present form, was an engine of morality and decency, and a social safeguard, as well as an amusement. It comprised a Committee of Investigation, and a Court of Appeal; its object was to arraign slander. Lady Kane declined the honour. 'I am not a washerwoman,' she said to me, and spoke of where dirty linen should be washed, and was distressingly broad in her innuendoes concerning Edbury's stepmother. This Club sat and became a terror for a month, adding something to my father's reputation. His inexhaustible conversational art and humour gave it such vitality as it had. Ladies of any age might apply for admission when well seconded: gentlemen under forty-five years were rigidly excluded, and the seniors must also have passed through the marriage ceremony.

Outside tattle and scandal declared, that the Club was originated to serve as a club for Lady Edbury, but I chose to have no opinion upon what I knew nothing of.

These matters were all ephemeral, and freaks; they produced, however, somewhat of the same effect on me as on my father, in persuading me that he was born for the sphere he occupied, and rendering me rather callous as to the sources of ways and means. I put my name to a bond for several thousand pounds, in conjunction with Lord Edbury, thinking my father right in wishing to keep my cheque-book unworried, lest the squire should be seized with a spasm of curiosity before the two months were over. 'I promise you I surprise him,' my father said repeatedly. He did not say how: I had the

suspicion that he did not know. His confidence and my growing recklessness acted in unison.

Page 23

Happily the newspapers were quiet. I hoped consequently to find peace at Riversley; but there the rumours of the Grand Parade were fabulous, thanks to Captain Bulsted and Julia, among others. These two again provoked an outbreak of rage from the squire, and I, after hearing them, was almost disposed to side with him; they suggested an inexplicable magnificence, and created an image of a man portentously endowed with the capacity to throw dust in the eyes. No description of the Balls could have furnished me with such an insight of their brilliancy as the consuming ardour they awakened in the captain and his wife. He reviewed them: 'Princely entertainments! Arabian Nights!'

She built them up piecemeal: 'The company! the dresses! the band! the supper!' The host was a personage supernatural. 'Aladdin's magician, if you like,' said Julia, 'only-good! A perfect gentleman! and I'll say again, confound his enemies.' She presumed, as she was aware she might do, upon the squire's prepossession in her favour, without reckoning that I was always the victim.

'Heard o' that new story 'bout a Dauphin?' he asked.

'A Dauphin?' quoth Captain Bulsted. 'I don't know the fish.'

'You've been in a pretty kettle of 'em lately, William. I heard of it yesterday on the Bench. Lord Shale, our new Lord-Lieutenant, brought it down. A trick they played the fellow 'bout a Dauphin. Serve him right. You heard anything 'bout it, Harry?'

I had not.

'But I tell ye there is a Dauphin mixed up with him. A Dauphin and Mr. Ik Dine!'

'Mr. Ik Dine!' exclaimed the captain, perplexed.

'Ay, that's German lingo, William, and you ought to know it if you're a loyal sailor--- means "I serve."'

'Mr. Beltham,' said the captain, seriously, 'I give you my word of honour as a man and a British officer, I don't understand one syllable of what you're saying; but if it means any insinuation against the gentleman who condescends to extend his hospitalities to my wife and me, I must, with regret, quit the place where I have had the misfortune to hear it.'

'You stop where you are, William,' the squire motioned to him. 'Gad, I shall have to padlock my mouth, or I shan't have a friend left soon . . . confounded fellow. . . I tell you they call him Mr. Ik Dine in town. Ik Dine and a Dauphin! They made a regular clown and pantaloons o' the pair, I'm told. Couple o' pretenders to Thrones invited to dine together and talk over their chances and show their private marks. Oho! by-and-by, William! You and I! Never a man made such a fool of in his life!'

The ladies retired. The squire continued, in a furious whisper:

Page 24

'They got the two together, William. Who are you? I'm a Dauphin; who are you? I'm Ik Dine, bar sinister. Oh! says the other, then I take precedence of you! Devil a bit, says the other; I've got more spots than you. Proof, says one. You first, t' other. Count, one cries. T' other sings out, Measles. Better than a dying Dauphin, roars t' other; and swore both of 'm 'twas nothing but Port-wine stains and pimples. Ha! ha! And, William, will you believe it?—the couple went round begging the company to count spots—ha! ha! to prove their big birth! Oh, Lord, I'd ha' paid a penny to be there! A Jack o' Bedlam Ik Dine damned idiot!—makes name o' Richmond stink.' (Captain Bulsted shot a wild stare round the room to make sure that the ladies had gone.) 'I tell ye, William, I had it from Lord Shale himself only yesterday on the Bench. He brought it to us hot from town—didn't know I knew the fellow; says the fellow's charging and firing himself off all day and all night too—can't make him out. Says London's mad about him: lots o' women, the fools! Ha, ha! a Dauphin!'

'Ah, well, sir,' Captain Bulsted supplicated feverishly, rubbing his brows and whiskers.

'It 's true, William. Fellow ought to be taken up and committed as a common vagabond, and would be anywhere but in London. I'd jail him 'fore you cocked your eye twice. Fellow came here and talked me over to grant him a couple o' months to prove he hasn't swindled his son of every scrap of his money. We shall soon see. Not many weeks to run! And pretends—fellow swears to me—can get him into Parliament; swears he'll get him in 'fore the two months are over! An infernal—'

'Please to recollect, sir; the old hereditary shall excuse you——'

'Gout, you mean, William? By——'

'You are speaking in the presence of his son, sir, and you are trying the young gentleman's affection for you hard.'

'Eh? 'Cause I'm his friend? Harry,' my grandfather faced round on me, 'don't you know I'm the friend you can trust? Hal, did I ever borrow a farthing of you? Didn't I, the day of your majority, hand you the whole of your inheritance from your poor broken-hearted mother, with interest, and treat you like a man? And never played spy, never made an inquiry, till I heard the scamp had been fastening on you like a blood-sucker, and singing hymns into the ears of that squeamish dolt of a pipe-smoking parson, Peterborough—never thought of doing it! Am I the man that dragged your grandmother's name through the streets and soiled yours?'

I remarked that I was sensible of the debt of gratitude I owed to him, but would rather submit to the scourge, or to destitution, than listen to these attacks on my father.

'Cut yourself loose, Harry,' he cried, a trifle mollified. 'Don't season his stew—d' ye hear? Stick to decent people. Why, you don't expect he'll be locked up in the Tower for

a finish, eh? It'll be Newgate, or the Bench. He and his Dauphin—ha! ha! A rascal crow and a Jack Dauphin!

Page 25

Captain Bulsted reached me his hand. 'You have a great deal to bear, Harry. I commend you, my boy, for taking it manfully.'

'I say no more,' quoth the squire. 'But what I said was true. The fellow gives his little dinners and suppers to his marchionesses, countesses, duchesses, and plays clown and pantaloon among the men. He thinks a parcel o' broidered petticoats 'll float him. So they may till a tradesman sent stark mad pops a pin into him. Harry, I'd as lief hang on to a fire-ship. Here's Ilchester tells me . . . and Ilchester speaks of him under his breath now as if he were sitting in a pew funking the parson. Confound the fellow! I say he's guilty of treason. Pooh! who cares! He cuts out the dandies of his day, does he? He's past sixty, if he's a month. It's all damned harlequinade. Let him twirl off one columbine or another, or a dozen, and then—the last of him! Fellow makes the world look like a farce. He 's got about eight feet by five to caper on, and all London gaping at him—geese! Are you a gentleman and a man of sense, Harry Richmond, to let yourself be lugged about in public— by the Lord! like a pair of street-tumblers in spangled haunch-bags, father and boy, on a patch of carpet, and a drum banging, and tossed and turned inside out, and my God! the ass of a fellow strutting the ring with you on his shoulder! That's the spectacle. And you, Harry, now I 'll ask you, do you mean your wife—egad, it'd be a pretty scene, with your princess in hip-up petticoats, stiff as bottle-funnel top down'ards, airing a whole leg, and knuckling a tambourine!'

'Not crying, my dear lad?' Captain Bulsted put his arm round me kindly, and tried to catch a glimpse of my face. I let him see I was not going through that process. 'Whew!' said he, 'and enough to make any Christian sweat! You're in a bath, Harry. I wouldn't expect the man who murdered his godmother for one shilling and fivepence three-farthings the other day, to take such a slinging, and think he deserved it.'

My power of endurance had reached its limit.

'You tell me, sir, you had this brutal story from the Lord-Lieutenant of the county?'

'Ay, from Lord Shale. But I won't have you going to him and betraying our connection with a—'

'Halloo !' Captain Bulsted sang out to his wife on the lawn. 'And now, squire, I have had my dose. And you will permit me to observe, that I find it emphatically what we used to call at school black-jack.'

'And you were all the better for it afterwards, William.'

'We did not arrive at that opinion, sir. Harry, your arm. An hour with the ladies will do us both good. The squire,' he murmured, wiping his forehead as he went out, 'has a knack of bringing us into close proximity with hell-fire when he pleases.'

Julia screamed on beholding us, 'Aren't you two men as pale as death!'

Janet came and looked. 'Merely a dose,' said the captain. 'We are anxious to play battledore and shuttlecock madly.'

Page 26

'So he shall, the dear!' Julia caressed him. 'We'll all have a tournament in the wet-weather shed.'

Janet whispered to me, 'Was it—the Returning Thanks?'

'The what?' said I, with the dread at my heart of something worse than I had heard.

She hailed Julia to run and fetch the battledores, and then told me she had been obliged to confiscate the newspapers that morning and cast the burden on post-office negligence. 'They reach grandada's hands by afternoon post, Harry, and he finds objectionable passages blotted or cut out; and as long as the scissors don't touch the business columns and the debates, he never asks me what I have been doing. He thinks I keep a scrap-book. I haven't often time in the morning to run an eye all over the paper. This morning it was the first thing I saw.'

What had she seen? She led me out of view of the windows and showed me.

My father was accused of having stood up at a public dinner and returned thanks on behalf of an Estate of the Realm: it read monstrously. I ceased to think of the suffering inflicted on me by my grandfather.

Janet and I, side by side with the captain and Julia, carried on the game of battledore and shuttlecock, in a match to see whether the unmarried could keep the shuttle flying as long as the married, with varying fortunes. She gazed on me, to give me the comfort of her sympathy, too much, and I was too intent on the vision of my father either persecuted by lies or guilty of hideous follies, to allow the match to be a fair one. So Julia could inform the squire that she and William had given the unmarried pair a handsome beating, when he appeared peeping round one of the shed-pillars.

'Of course you beat 'em,' said the squire. 'It 's not my girl's fault.' He said more, to the old tune, which drove Janet away.

I remembered, when back in the London vortex, the curious soft beauty she won from casting up her eyes to watch the descending feathers, and the brilliant direct beam of those thick-browed, firm, clear eyes, with her frown, and her set lips and brave figure, when she was in the act of striking to keep up a regular quick fusilade. I had need of calm memories. The town was astir, and humming with one name.

CHAPTER XLII

THE MARQUIS OF EDBURY AND HIS PUPPET

I passed from man to man, hearing hints and hesitations, alarming half-remarks, presumed to be addressed to one who could supply the remainder, and deduce

consequences. There was a clearer atmosphere in the street of Clubs. Jennings was the first of my father's more intimate acquaintances to meet me frankly. He spoke, though not with great seriousness, of the rumour of a possible prosecution. Sir Weeton Slater tripped up to us with a mixed air of solicitude and restraint, asked whether I was well, and whether I had seen the newspapers that morning; and on my informing him that I had just come up from Riversley, on account of certain rumours, advised me to remain in town strictly for the present. He also hinted at rumours of prosecutions. 'The fact is——' he began several times, rendered discreet, I suppose, by my juvenility, fierte, and reputed wealth.

Page 27

We were joined by Admiral Loftus and Lord Alton. They queried and counterqueried as to passages between my father and the newspapers, my father and the committee of his Club, preserving sufficient consideration for me to avoid the serious matter in all but distant allusions; a point upon which the breeding of Mr. Serjeant Wedderburn was not so accurate a guide to him. An exciting public scandal soon gathers knots of gossips in Clubland. We saw Wedderburn break from a group some way down the pavement and pick up a fresh crumb of amusement at one of the doorsteps. 'Roy Richmond is having his benefit to-day!' he said, and repeated this and that, half audible to me. For the rest, he pooh-poohed the idea of the Law intervening. His 'How d' ye do, Mr. Richmond, how d' ye do?' was almost congratulatory. 'I think we meet at your father's table to-night? It won't be in the Tower, take my word for it. Oh! the papers! There's no Act to compel a man to deny what appears in the papers. No such luck as the Tower!—though Littlepitt (Mr. Wedderburn's nickname for our Premier) would be fool enough for that. He would. If he could turn attention from his Bill, he'd do it. We should have to dine off Boleyn's block:—coquite horum obsonia he'd say, eh?'

Jennings espied my father's carriage, and stepped to speak a word to the footman. He returned, saying, with a puff of his cheeks: 'The Grand Monarque has been sending his state equipage to give the old backbiting cripple Brisby an airing. He is for horse exercise to-day they've dropped him in Courtenay Square. There goes Brisby. He'd take the good Samaritan's shilling to buy a flask of poison for him. He 'll use Roy's carriage to fetch and carry for that venomous old woman Kane, I'll swear.'

'She's a male in Scripture,' said Wedderburn, and this reminded me of an anecdote that reminded him of another, and after telling them, he handed round his hat for the laugh, as my father would have phrased it.

'Has her ladyship declared war?' Sir Weeton Slater inquired.

'No, that's not her preliminary to wageing it,' Wedderburn replied. These high-pressure smart talkers had a moment of dulness, and he bethought him that he must run into the Club for letters, and was busy at Westminster, where, if anything fresh occurred between meridian and six o'clock, he should be glad, he said, to have word of it by messenger, that he might not be behind his Age.

The form of humour to express the speed of the world was common, but it struck me as a terrible illustration of my father's. I had still a sense of pleasure in the thought that these intimates of his were gentlemen who relished and, perhaps, really liked him. They were not parasites; not the kind of men found hanging about vulgar profligates.

Page 28

I quitted them. Sir Weeton Slater walked half-a-dozen steps beside me. 'May I presume on a friendly acquaintance with your father, Mr. Richmond?' he said. 'The fact is—you will not be offended?—he is apt to lose his head, unless the Committee of Supply limits him very precisely. I am aware that there is no material necessity for any restriction.' He nodded to me as to one of the marvellously endowed, as who should say, the Gods presided at your birth. The worthy baronet struggled to impart his meaning, which was, that he would have me define something like an allowance to my father, not so much for the purpose of curtailing his expenditure—he did not venture upon private ground—as to bridle my father's ideas of things possible for a private gentleman in this country. In that character none were like him. As to his suit, or appeal, he could assure me that Serjeant Wedderburn, and all who would or could speak on the subject, saw no prospect of success; not any. The worst of it was, that it caused my father to commit himself in sundry ways. It gave a handle to his enemies. It—he glanced at me indicatively.

I thanked the well-meaning gentleman without encouraging him to continue.

'It led him to perform once more as a Statue of Bronze before the whole of gaping London!' I could have added. That scene on the pine-promontory arose in my vision, followed by other scenes of the happy German days. I had no power to conjure up the princess.

Jorian DeWitt was the man I wanted to see. After applications at his Club and lodgings I found him dragging his Burgundy leg in the Park, on his road to pay a morning visit to his fair French enchantress. I impeached him, and he pleaded guilty, clearly not wishing to take me with him, nor would he give me *Mlle*. Jenny's address, which I had. By virtue of the threat that I would accompany him if he did not satisfy me, I managed to extract the story of the Dauphin, aghast at the discovery of its being true. The fatal after-dinner speech he believed to have been actually spoken, and he touched on that first. 'A trap was laid for him, Harry Richmond; and a deuced clever trap it was. They smuggled in special reporters. There wasn't a bit of necessity for the toast. But the old vixen has shown her hand, so now he must fight. He can beat her single-handed on settees. He'll find her a tartar at long bowls: she sticks at nothing. She blazes out, that he scandalizes her family. She has a dozen indictments against him. You must stop in town and keep watch. There's fire in my leg to explode a powder-magazine a mile off!'

'Is it the Margravine of Rippau?' I inquired. I could think of no other waspish old woman.

'Lady Dane,' said Jorian. 'She set Edbury on to face him with the Dauphin. You don't fancy it came of the young dog "all of himself," do you? Why, it was clever! He trots about a briefless little barrister, a scribbler, devilish clever and impudent, who does his farces for him. Tenby's the fellow's name, and it's the only thing I haven't heard him pun on. Puns are the smallpox of the language;—we're cursed with an epidemic. By gad, the next time I meet him I'll roar out for vaccine matter.'

Page 29

He described the dinner given by Edbury at a celebrated City tavern where my father and this so-called Dauphin were brought together. 'Dinner to-night,' he nodded, as he limped away on his blissful visit of ceremony to sprightly Chassediane (a bouquet had gone in advance): he left me stupefied. The sense of ridicule enveloped me in suffocating folds, howling sentences of the squire's Boeotian burlesque by fits. I felt that I could not but take the world's part against the man who allowed himself to be made preposterous externally, when I knew him to be staking his frail chances and my fortune with such rashness. It was unpardonable for one in his position to incur ridicule. Nothing but a sense of duty kept me from rushing out of London, and I might have indulged the impulse advantageously. Delay threw me into the clutches of Lady Kane herself, on whom I looked with as composed a visage as I could command, while she leaned out of her carriage chattering at me, and sometimes over my head to passing gentlemen.

She wanted me to take a seat beside her, she had so much to say. Was there not some funny story abroad of a Pretender to the Throne of France? she asked, wrinkling her crow'sfeet eyelids to peer at me, and wished to have the particulars. I had none to offer. 'Ah! well,' said she; 'you stay in London? Come and see me. I'm sure you're sensible. You and I can put our heads together. He's too often in Courtenay Square, and he's ten years too young for that, still. He ought to have good advice. Tell me, how can a woman who can't guide herself help a man?—and the most difficult man alive! I'm sure you understand me. I can't drive out in the afternoon for them. They make a crush here, and a clatter of tongues! . . . That's my private grievance. But he's now keeping persons away who have the first social claim . . . I know they can't appear. Don't look confused; no one accuses you. Only I do say it's getting terribly hot in London for somebody. Call on me. Will you?'

She named her hours. I bowed as soon as I perceived my opportunity. Her allusions were to Lady Edbury, and to imputed usurpations of my father's. I walked down to the Chambers where Temple was reading Law, for a refuge from these annoyances. I was in love with the modest shadowed life Temple lived, diligently reading, and glancing on the world as through a dusky window, happy to let it run its course while he sharpened his weapons. A look at Temple's face told me he had heard quite as much as was known in the West. Dining-halls of lawyers are not Cistercian; he was able to give me three distinct versions of the story of the Dauphin. No one could be friendlier. Indeed Temple now urged me forcibly to prevent my father from spending money and wearing his heart out in vain, by stopping the case in Dettermain and Newson's hands. They were respectable lawyers, he said, in a lawyer's ordinary tone when including such of his species as are not black sheep. He thought it possible that my father's personal influence overbore their judgment. In fact, nothing bound them to refuse to work for him, and he believed that they had submitted their views for his consideration.

Page 30

'I do wish he'd throw it up,' Temple exclaimed. 'It makes him enemies. And just examining it, you see he could get no earthly good out of it: he might as well try to scale a perpendicular rock. But when I'm with him, I'm ready to fancy what he pleases—I acknowledge that. He has excess of phosphorus, or he's ultra-electrical; doctors could tell us better than lawyers.' Temple spoke of the clever young barrister Tenby as the man whom his father had heard laughing over the trick played upon 'Roy Richmond.' I conceived that I might furnish Mr. Tenby a livelier kind of amusement, and the thought that I had once been *sur le terrain*, and had bitterly regretted it, by no means deterred me from the idea of a second expedition, so black was my mood. A review of the circumstances, aided by what reached my ears before the night went over, convinced me that Edbury was my man. His subordinate helped him to the instrument, and possibly to the plot, but Edbury was the capital offender.

The scene of the prank was not in itself so bad as the stuff which a cunning anecdotist could make out of it. Edbury invited my father to a dinner at a celebrated City tavern. He kept his guests (Jennings, Jorian DeWitt, Alton, Wedderburn, were among the few I was acquainted with who were present) awaiting the arrival of a person for whom he professed extraordinary respect. The Dauphin of France was announced. A mild, flabby, amiable-looking old person, with shelving forehead and grey locks—excellently built for the object, Jorian said—entered. The Capet head and embonpoint were there. As far as a personal resemblance might go, his pretensions to be the long-lost Dauphin were grotesquely convincing, for, notwithstanding the accurate picture of the Family presented by him, the man was a pattern bourgeois:—a sturdy impostor, one would have thought, and I thought so when I heard of him; but I have been assured that he had actually grown old in the delusion that he, carrying on his business in the City of London, was the identical Dauphin.

Edbury played his part by leading his poor old victim half way to meet his other most honoured guest, hesitating then and craving counsel whether he was right in etiquette to advance the Dauphin so far. The Dauphin left him mildly to decide the point: he was eminently mild throughout, and seems to have thought himself in good faith surrounded by believers and adherents. Edbury's task soon grew too delicate for that coarse boy. In my father's dexterous hands he at once lost his assumption of the gallantry of manner which could alone help him to retain his advantage. When the wine was in him he began to bawl. I could imagine the sort of dialogue he raised. Bets on the Dauphin, bets on Roy: they were matched as on a racecourse. The Dauphin remembered incidents of his residence in the Temple, with a beautiful juvenile faintness: a conscientious angling for recollection, Wedderburn said. Roy was requested to remember something, to drink and refresh his memory infantine incidents were suggested. He fenced the treacherous host during dinner with superb complacency.

Page 31

The Dauphin was of an immoveable composure. He 'stated simple facts: he was the Dauphin of France, providentially rescued from the Temple in the days of the Terror.' For this deliverance, somewhat to the consternation of the others, he offered up a short prayer of thanksgiving over his plate. He had, he said, encountered incredulity. He had his proofs. He who had never been on the soil of France since early boyhood, spoke French with a pure accent: he had the physical and moral constitution of the Family: owing to events attending his infant days, he was timid. Jorian imitated him:—'I start at the opening of a door; I see dark faces in my sleep: it is a dungeon; I am at the knees of my Unfortunate Royal Father, with my Beautiful Mother.' His French was quaint, but not absurd. He became loquacious, apostrophizing vacancy with uplifted hand and eye. The unwonted invitation to the society of noblemen made him conceive his Dauphinship to be on the high road to a recognition in England, and he was persuaded to drink and exhibit proofs: which were that he had the constitution of the Family, as aforesaid, in every particular; that he was peculiarly marked with testificatory spots; and that his mere aspect inspired all members and branch members of the Family with awe and stupefaction. One of the latter hearing of him, had appointed to meet him in a pastrycook's shop. He met him, and left the place with a cloud on his brow, showing tokens of respectful sympathy.

Conceive a monomaniacal obese old English citizen, given to lift hand and eye and address the cornices, claiming to be an Illustrious Boy, and calling on a beautiful historic mother and unfortunate Royal sire to attest it! No wonder the table was shaken with laughter. He appealed to Tenby constantly, as to the one man he knew in the room. Tenby it was who made the discovery of him somewhere in the City, where he earned his livelihood either as a corn-merchant; or a stockbroker, or a chronometer-maker, or a drysalter, and was always willing to gratify a customer with the sight of his proofs of identity. Mr. Tenby made it his business to push his clamorous waggishness for the exhibition. I could readily believe that my father was more than his match in disposable sallies and weight of humour, and that he shielded the old creature successfully, so long as he had a tractable being to protect. But the Dauphin was plied with wine, and the marquis had his fun. Proof upon proof in verification of his claims was proffered by the now-tremulous son of St. Louis—so he called himself. With, Jorian admitted, a real courtly dignity, he stood up and proposed to lead the way to any neighbouring cabinet to show the spots on his person; living witnesses to the truth of his allegations, he declared them to be. The squire had authority for his broad farce, except in so far as he mixed up my father in the swinery of it.

Page 32

I grew more and more convinced that my father never could have lost his presence of mind when he found himself in the net of a plot to cover him with ridicule. He was the only one who did not retire to the Dauphin's 'chamber of testification,' to return convulsed with vinous laughter after gravely inspecting the evidence; for which abstention the Dauphin reproached him violently, in round terms of abuse, challenging him to go through a similar process. This was the signal for Edbury, Tenby, and some of the rest. They formed a circle, one-half for the Dauphin, one for Roy. How long the boorish fun lasted, and what exactly came of it, I did not hear. Jorian DeWitt said my father lost his temper, a point contested by Wedderburn and Jennings, for it was unknown of him. Anyhow, he thundered to some effect, inasmuch as he detached those that had gentlemanly feelings from the wanton roysterers, and next day the latter pleaded wine. But they told the story, not without embellishments. The world followed their example.

I dined and slept at Temple's house, not caring to meet my incarnate humiliation. I sent to hear that he was safe. A quiet evening with a scholarly man, and a man of strong practical ability and shrewdness, like Mr. Temple, did me good. I wished my father and I were on the same footing as he and his son, and I may add his daughters. They all talked sensibly; they were at feud with nobody; they reflected their condition. It was a simple orderly English household, of which the father was the pillar, the girls the ornaments, the son the hope, growing to take his father's place. My envy of such a home was acute, and I thought of Janet, and how well she was fashioned to build one resembling it, if only the mate allotted to her should not be a fantastical dreamer. Temple's character seemed to me to demand a wife like Janet on its merits; an idea that depressed me exceedingly. I had introduced Temple to Anna Penrhys, who was very kind to him; but these two were not framed to be other than friends. Janet, on the contrary, might some day perceive the sterling fellow Temple was, notwithstanding his moderate height. She might, I thought. I remembered that I had once wished that she would, and I was amazed at myself. But why? She was a girl sure to marry. I brushed these meditations away. They recurred all the time I was in Temple's house.

Mr. Temple waited for my invitation to touch on my father's Case, when he distinctly pronounced his opinion that it could end but in failure. Though a strict Constitutionalist, he had words of disgust for princes, acknowledging, however, that we were not practical in our use of them, and kept them for political purposes often to the perversion of our social laws and their natural dispositions. He spoke of his son's freak in joining the Navy. 'That was the princess's doing,' said Temple. 'She talked of our naval heroes, till she made me feel I had only to wear the anchor

Page 33

buttons to be one myself. Don't tell her I was invalided from the service, Richie, for the truth is, I believe, I half-shammed. And the time won't be lost. You'll see I shall extract guineas from "old ocean" like salt. Precious few barristers understand maritime cases. The other day I was in Court, and prompted a great Q.C. in a case of collision. Didn't I, sir?'

'I think there was a hoarse whisper audible up to the Judge's seat at intervals,' said Mr. Temple.

'The Bar cannot confess to obligations from those who don't wear the robe,' Temple rejoined.

His father advised me to read for the Bar, as a piece of very good training.

I appealed to Temple, whether he thought it possible to read law-books in a cockboat in a gale of wind.

Temple grimaced and his father nodded. Still it struck me that I might one day have the felicity of quiet hours to sit down with Temple and read Law—far behind him in the race. And he envied me, in his friendly manner, I knew. My ambition had been blown to tatters.

A new day dawned. The household rose and met at the breakfast-table, devoid of any dread of the morning newspapers. Their talk was like the chirrup of birds. Temple and his father walked away together to chambers, bent upon actual business—upon doing something! I reflected emphatically, and compared them to ships with rudders, while I was at the mercy of wind, tide, and wave. I called at Dettermain and Newson's, and heard there of a discovery of a witness essential to the case, either in North Wales or in New South. I did not, as I had intended, put a veto on their proceedings. The thing to do was to see my father, and cut the case at the fountain head. For this purpose, it was imperative that I should go to him, and prepare myself for the interview by looking at the newspapers first. I bought one, hastily running my eyes down the columns in the shop. His name was printed, but merely in a fashionable notification that carriages took up and set down for his costume Ball, according to certain regulations. The relief of comparative obscurity helped me to breathe freely: not to be laughed at, was a gain. I was rather inclined to laud his courage in entering assembly-rooms, where he must be aware that he would see the Dauphin on every face. Perhaps he was guilty of some new extravagance last night, too late for scandal to reinforce the reporters!

Mrs. Waddy had a woeful visage when informing me that he was out, gone to Courtenay Square. She ventured a murmur of bills coming in. Like everybody else, she fancied he drew his supplies from my inexhaustible purse; she hoped the bills would be paid off

immediately: the servants' wages were overdue. 'Never can I get him to attend to small accounts,' she whimpered, and was so ready to cry outright, that I said, 'Tusk,' and with the one word gave her comfort. 'Of course, you, Mr. Harry, can settle them, I know that.' We were drawing near to poor old Sewis's legacy, even for the settling of the small accounts!

Page 34

London is a narrow place to one not caring to be seen. I could not remain in this creditor-riddled house; I shunned the Parks, the Clubs, and the broad, brighter streets of the West. Musing on the refreshing change it would be to me to find myself suddenly on board Captain Jasper Welsh's barque *Priscilla*, borne away to strange climes and tongues, the world before me, I put on the striding pace which does not invite interruption, and no one but Edbury would have taken the liberty. I heard his shout. 'Halloa! Richmond.' He was driving his friend Witlington in his cabriolet. 'Richmond, my hearty, where the deuce have you been? I wanted you to dine with me the other night.'

I replied, looking at him steadily, that I wished I had been there.

'Compendious larks!' cried he, in the slang of his dog's day. 'I say; you're one at Duke Fitz's masquerade to-night? Tell us your toggery. Hang it, you might go for the Black Prince. I'm Prince Hal. Got a headache? Come to my Club and try my mixture. Yoicks! it'd make Methuselah and Melchisedec jump up and have a twirl and a fandango. I say, you're thick with that little French actress Chastedian jolly little woman! too much to say for herself to suit me.'

He described the style of woman that delighted him—an ideal English shepherdess of the print-shops, it appeared, and of extremely remote interest to me, I thought at the time. Eventually I appointed to walk round to his Club, and he touched his horse gently, and bobbed his diminutive henchman behind his smart cabriolet, the admiration of the street.

I found him waiting for me on the steps of his Club, puffing a cigar with all his vigour, in the classic attitude of a trumpeter. My first words were: 'I think I have to accuse you of insulting me.'

'Insulting you, Richmond!' he cried, much surprised, holding his cigar in transit.

'If you insult my father, I make you responsible to me.'

'Insult old Duke Fitz! I give you my word of honour, Richmond—why, I like him; I like the old boy. Wouldn't hurt him for the world and all Havannah.

What the deuce have you got into your head? Come in and smoke.'

The mention of his dinner and the Dauphin crazed him with laughter. He begged me as a man to imagine the scene: the old Bloated Bourbon of London Wall and Camberwell! an Illustrious Boy!—drank like a fish!—ready to show himself to the waiters! And then with 'Gee' and 'Gaw,' the marquis spouted out reminiscences of scene, the best ever witnessed! 'Up starts the Dauphin. "Damn you, sir! and damn me, sir, if believe you have a spot on your whole body!" And snuffles and puffs—you should have been there



Richmond, I wrote to ask you: did, upon my life! wanted you there. Lord! why, you won't get such fun in a century. And old Roy! he behaved uncommonly finely: said capital things, by Jove! Never saw him shine so; old trump! Says Dauphin, "My beautiful mother had a longing for strawberries out of season. I am marked with a strawberry, here." Says Roy: "It is an admirable and roomy site, but as I am not your enemy, sir, I doubt if I shall often have the opportunity to behold it." Ha! ha!—gee! Richmond, you've missed the deucedest good scene ever acted.'

Page 35

How could I, after having had an adversary like Prince Otto, call upon a fellow such as Edbury to give me reason for his conduct? He rollicked and laughed until my ungovernable impatience brought him to his senses.

'Dash it, you're a fire-eater, I know, Richmond. We can't fight in this country; ain't allowed. And fighting 's infernal folly. By Jove! If you're going to tumble down every man who enjoys old Roy, you've your work cut out for you. He's long chalks the best joke out. 'Twixt you and me, he did return thanks. What does it matter what old Duke Fitz does? I give him a lift on his ladder with all my heart. He keeps a capital table. And I'll be hanged if he hasn't got the secret of the women. How he does it old Roy! If the lords were ladies they'd vote him premier peer, double quick. And I'll tell you what, Richmond, I'm thought a devil of a good-tempered fellow for not keeping watch over Courtenay Square. I don't call it my business to be house dog for a pretty stepmother. But there's talking and nodding, and oh! leave all that: come in and smoke, and let me set you up; and I'll shake your hand. Halloo! I'm hailed.'

A lady, grasping the veil across her face, beckoned her hand from a closed carriage below. Edbury ran down to her. I caught sight of ravishing golden locks, reminding me of Mabel Sweetwinter's hair, and pricking me with a sensation of spite at the sex for their deplorable madness in the choice of favourites. Edbury called me to come to the carriage window. I moved slowly, but the carriage wheeled about and rolled away. I could just see the outline of a head muffled in furs and lace.

'Queer fish, women!' he delivered himself of the philosophical ejaculation cloudily. I was not on terms with him to offer any remark upon the one in question. His imperturbable good humour foiled me, and I left him, merely giving him a warning, to which his answer was:

'Oh! come in and have a bottle of claret.'

Claret or brandy had done its work on him by the time I encountered him some hours later, in the Park. Bramham DeWitt, whom I met in the same neighbourhood, offered me a mount after lunch, advising me to keep near my father as much as I conveniently could; and he being sure to appear in the Park, I went, and heard his name to the right and left of me. He was now, as he said to me once that he should become, 'the tongue of London.' I could hardly expect to escape from curious scrutiny myself; I was looked at. Here and there I had to lift my hat and bow. The stultification of one's feelings and ideas in circumstances which divide and set them at variance is worse than positive pain. The looks shed on me were rather flattering, but I knew that in the background I was felt to be the son of the notorious. Edbury came trotting up to us like a shaken sack, calling, 'Neigh! any of you seen old Roy?' Bramham DeWitt, a stiff, fashionable man of fifty, proud of his blood and quick as his cousin Jorian to resent an impertinence, replied:

Page 36

'Are you the Marquis of Edbury, or a drunken groom, sir?'

"Gad, old gentleman, I've half a mind to ride you down," said Edbury, and, espying me, challenged me to a race to run down the fogies.

A cavalcade of six abreast came cantering along. I saw my father listen to a word from Lady Edbury, and push his horse to intercept the marquis. They spoke. 'Presently, presently,' my father said; 'ride to the rear, and keep at half a stone's throw-say, a groom's distance.'

'Groom be hanged!' Edbury retorted. 'I made a bet I'd drive you out of the Park, old Roy!'

'Ride behind, then,' said my father, and to my astonishment Edbury obeyed him, with laughter. Lady Edbury smiled to herself; and I experienced the esteem I perceived in her for a masterful manner. A few minutes later my father beckoned me to pay my respects to Graf Kesensky, an ambassador with strong English predilections and some influence among us. He asked me if he was right in supposing I wished to enter Parliament. I said he was, wondering at the interest a foreigner could find in it. The count stopped a quiet-pacing gentleman. Bramhaxri DeWitt joined them, and a group of friends. I was introduced to Mr. Beauchamp Hill, the Government whip, who begged me to call on him with reference to the candidature of a Sussex borough: 'that is,' said he, turning to Graf Kesensky, 'if you're sure the place is open? I've heard nothing of Falmouth's accident.' The count replied that Falmouth was his intimate friend; he had received a special report that Falmouth was dying, just as he was on the point of mounting his horse. 'We shan't have lost time,' said Mr. Hill. The Government wanted votes. I went down to the House of Commons at midnight to see him. He had then heard of Falmouth's hopeless condition, and after extracting my political views, which were for the nonce those of a happy subserviency, he expressed his belief that the new writ for the borough of Chippenden might be out, and myself seated on the Government benches, within a very short period. Nor would it be necessary, he thought, for the Government nominee to spend money: 'though that does not affect you, Mr. Richmond!' My supposed wealth gave me currency even in political circles.

CHAPTER XLIII

I BECOME ONE OF THE CHOSEN OF THE NATION

An entire revulsion in my feelings and my way of thinking was caused by this sudden change of prospect. A member of our Parliament, I could then write to Ottilia, and tell her that I had not wasted time. And it was due to my father, I confessed, when he returned from his ball at dawn, . that I should thank him for speaking to Graf Kesensky. 'Oh!' said he, 'that was our luck, Richie. I have been speaking about you to hundreds

for the last six months, and now we owe it to a foreigner!' I thanked him again. He looked eminently handsome

Page 37

in his Henry III. costume, and was disposed to be as luxurious as his original. He had brought Count Lika, Secretary of Legation to the Austrian Embassy, dressed as an Albanian, with him. The two were stretched on couches, and discoursing of my father's reintroduction of the sedan chair to society. My father explained that he had ordered a couple of dozen of these chairs to be built on a pattern of his own. And he added, 'By the way, Richie, there will be sedaniers—porters to pay to-day. Poor men should be paid immediately.' I agreed with the monarch. Contemplating him, I became insensible to the sting of ridicule which had been shooting through me, agonizing me for the last eight-and-forty hours. Still I thought: can I never escape from the fascination?—let me only get into Parliament! The idea in me was that Parliament lifted me nearer to Ottilia, and would prompt me to resolute action, out of his tangle of glittering cobwebs. I told him of my interview with Beauchamp Hill. 'I have never known Kesensky wrong yet,' said he; 'except in his backing of Falmouth's horses.' Count Lika murmured that he hoped his Chief would be wrong in something else: he spoke significantly. My father raised his eyebrows. 'In his opinion,' Lika accepted the invitation to pursue, 'Prince Ernest will not let that announcement stand uncontradicted.'

My father's eyes dwelt on him. 'Are we accused of it?'

Lika slipped from the question. 'Who is accused of a newspaper's doings? It is but the denial of a statement.'

'I dare them to deny it!—and, Lika, my dear fellow, light me a cigarette,' said my father.

'Then,' said Lika, touching the flame delicately, 'you take the view that Kesensky is wrong in another thing besides horses.'

I believe he struck on the subject casually: there was nothing for him to gain or lose in it; and he had a liking for my father.

After puffing the cigarette twice or thrice my father threw it down, resuming his conversation upon the sedan, the appropriate dresses of certain of the great masquerading ladies, and an incident that appeared to charge Jorian DeWitt with having misconducted himself. The moment Lika had gone upstairs for two or three hours' sleep, he said to me: 'Richie, you and I have no time for that. We must have a man at Falmouth's house by eight o'clock. If the scrubbing-maid on all fours—not an inelegant position, I have remarked—declares him dead, we are at Bartlett's (money-lender) by ten: and in Chippenden borough before two post meridian. As I am a tactician, there is mischief! but I will turn it to my uses, as I did our poor Jorian to-night; he smuggled in the Chassediane: I led her out on my arm. Of that by and by. The point is, that from your oath in Parliament you fly to Sarkeld. I implore you now, by your

love for me and the princess, not to lose precious minutes. Richie, we will press things so that you shall be in Sarkeld by the

Page 38

end of the month. My son! my dear boy! how you loved me once!—you do still! then follow my directions. I have a head. Ay, you think it wild? 'Tis true, my mother was a poetess. But I will convince my son as I am convincing the world—tut, tut! To avoid swelling talk, I tell you, Richie, I have my hand on the world's wheel, and now is the time for you to spring from it and gain your altitude. If you fail, my success is emptiness.'

'Will you avoid Edbury and his like, and protect yourself?' was my form of stipulation, spoken to counteract his urgency.

He gave no answer beyond a wave of the hand suitable to his princely one-coloured costume of ruffled lavender silk, and the magnificent leg he turned to front me. My senses even up to that period were so impressionable as to be swayed by a rich dress and a grand manner when circumstances were not too unfavourable. Now they seemed very favourable, for they offered me an upward path to tread. His appearance propitiated me less after he had passed through the hands of his man Tollingby, but I had again surrendered the lead to him. As to the risk of proceedings being taken against him, he laughed scornfully at the suggestion. 'They dare not. The more I dare, the less dare they.' Again I listened to his curious roundabout reasoning, which dragged humour at its heels like a comical cur, proclaiming itself imposingly, in spite of the mongrel's barking, to be prudence and common sense. Could I deny that I owed him gratitude for the things I cherished most?—for my acquaintance with Ottilia?—for his services in Germany?—for the prospect of my elevation in England? I could not; and I tried hard to be recklessly grateful. As to money, he reiterated that he could put his hand on it to satisfy the squire on the day of accounts: for the present, we must borrow. His argument upon borrowing—which I knew well, and wondered that I did not at the outset disperse with a breath of contempt—gained on me singularly when reviewed under the light of my immediate interests: it ran thus:—We have a rich or a barren future, just as we conceive it. The art of generalship in life consists in gathering your scattered supplies to suit a momentous occasion; and it is the future which is chiefly in debt to us, and adjures us for its sake to fight the fight and conquer. That man is vile and fit to be trampled on who cannot count his future in gold and victory. If, as we find, we are always in debt to the past, we should determine that the future is in our debt, and draw on it. Why let our future lie idle while we need succour? For instance, to-morrow I am to have what saves my reputation in the battle to-day; shall I not take it at once? The military commander who acts on that principle overcomes his adversary to a certainty.

Page 39

'You, Richie, the member for this borough of Chippenden, have won solid ground. I guarantee it to you. And you go straight from the hustings, or the first taste of parliamentary benches, to Sarkeld: you take your grandad's proposition to Prince Ernest: you bring back the prince's acceptance to the squire. Can you hope to have a princess without a battle for her?' More and much more in this strain, until—for he could read me and most human beings swiftly on the surface, notwithstanding the pressure of his fancifulness—he perceived that talking influenced me far less than activity, and so after a hurried breakfast and an innocuous glance at the damp morning papers, we started to the money-lender's, with Jennings to lend his name. We were in Chippenden close upon the hour my father had named, bringing to the startled electors the first news of their member's death.

During the heat of the canvass for votes I received a kind letter from the squire in reply to one of mine, wherein he congratulated me on my prospects of success, and wound up: 'Glad to see it announced you are off with that princess of yours. Show them we are as proud as they are, Harry, and a fig for the whole foreign lot! Come to Riversley soon, and be happy.' What did that mean? Heriot likewise said in a letter: 'So it's over? The proud prince kicks? You will not thank me for telling you now what you know I think about it.' I appealed to my father. 'Canvass! canvass!' cried he; and he persistently baffled me. It was from Temple I learnt that on the day of our starting for Chippenden, the newspapers contained a paragraph in large print flatly denying upon authority that there was any foundation for the report of an intended marriage between the Princess of Eppenwelzen-Sarkeld and an English gentleman. Then I remembered how that morning my father had flung the papers down, complaining of their dampness.

Would such denial have appeared without Ottilia's sanction?

My father proved that I was harnessed to him; there was no stopping, no time for grieving. Pace was his specific. He dragged me the round of the voters; he gave dinners at the inn of true Liberals, and ate of them contentedly; he delivered speeches incessantly. The whole force of his serio-comic genius was alive in its element at Chippenden. From balls and dinners, and a sharp contest to maintain his position in town, he was down among us by the first morning train, bright as Apollo, and quite the sun of the place, dazzling the independent electors and their wives, and even me somewhat; amazing me, certainly. Dettermain, his lawyer, who had never seen him in action, and supposed he would treat an election as he did his Case, with fits and starts of energy, was not less astonished, and tried to curb him.

'Mr. Dettermain, my dear sir, I apprehend it is the electoral maxim to woo the widowed borough with the tear in its eye, and I shall do so hotly, in a right masculine manner,' my father said. 'We have the start; and if we beat the enemy by nothing else we will beat him by constitution. We are the first in the field, and not to reap it is to acknowledge oneself deficient in the very first instrument with which grass was cut.'

Page 40

Our difficulty all through the election was to contend with his humour. The many triumphs it won for him, both in speech and in action, turned at least the dialectics of the argument against us, and amusing, flattering, or bewildering, contributed to silence and hold us passive. Political convictions of his own, I think I may say with truth, he had none. He would have been just as powerful, after his fashion, on the Tory side, pleading for Mr. Normanton Hipperdon; more, perhaps: he would have been more in earnest. His store of political axioms was Tory; but he did remarkably well, and with no great difficulty, in confuting them to the wives of voters, to the voters themselves, and at public assemblies. Our adversary was redoubtable; a promising Opposition member, ousted from his seat in the North—a handsome man, too, which my father admitted, and wealthy, being junior partner in a City banking firm. Anna Penrhys knew him, and treacherously revealed some of the enemy's secrets, notably concerning what he termed our incorrigible turn for bribery.

'And that means,' my father said, 'that Mr. Hipperdon does not possess the art of talking to the ladies. I shall try him in repartee on the hustings. I must contrive to have our Jorian at my elbow.'

The task of getting Jorian to descend upon such a place as Chippenden worried my father more than electoral anxieties. Jorian wrote, 'My best wishes to you. Be careful of your heads. The habit of the Anglo-Saxon is to conclude his burlesques with a play of cudgels. It is his notion of freedom, and at once the exordium and peroration of his eloquence. Spare me the Sussex accent on your return.'

My father read out the sentences of this letter with admiring bursts of indignation at the sarcasms, and an evident idea that I inclined to jealousy of the force displayed.

'But we must have him,' he said; 'I do not feel myself complete without Jorian.'

So he made dispositions for a concert to be given in Chippenden town. Jenny Chassediane was invited down to sing, and Jorian came in her wake, of course. He came to suffer tortures. She was obliging enough to transform me into her weapon of chastisement upon the poor fellow for his behaviour to her at the Ball-atrocious, I was bound to confess. On this point she hesitated just long enough to imply a doubt whether, under any circumstances, the dues of men should be considered before those of her sex, and then struck her hands together with enthusiasm for my father, who was, she observed—critical in millinery in the height of her ecstasy—the most majestic, charming, handsome Henri III. imaginable, the pride and glory of the assembly, only one degree too rosy at night for the tone of the lavender, needing a touch of French hands, and the merest trifle in want of compression about the waistband. She related that a certain Prince Henri d'Angleterre had buzzed at his ear annoyingly. 'Et Gascoigne, ou est-il?' called the King, and the Judge stepped forth to correct the obstreperous youth. The Judge was Jennings, clearly prepared by my father to foil the Prince—no other than

Edbury. It was incomprehensible to me that my father should tolerate the tatter's pranks; unless, indeed, he borrowed his name to bonds of which I heard nothing.

Page 41

Mademoiselle Chassediane vowed that her own dress was ravishing. She went attired as a boudoir-shepherdess or demurely-coquettish Sevres-china Ninette, such of whom Louis Quinze would chuck the chin down the deadly introductory walks of Versailles. The reason of her desiring to go was the fatal sin of curiosity, and, therefore, her sex's burden, not hers. Jorian was a Mousquetaire, with plumes and ruffles prodigious, and a hen's heart beneath his cock's feathers. 'Pourtant j'y allai. I saw your great ladies, how they carry themselves when they would amuse themselves, and, mon Dieu! Paris has done its utmost to grace their persons, and the length of their robes did the part of Providence in bestowing height upon them, parceque, vous savez, Monsieur, c'est extraordinaire comme ils ont les jambes courtes, ces Anglaises!' Our aristocracy, however, was not so bad in that respect as our bourgeoisie; yet it was easy to perceive that our female aristocracy, though they could ride, had never been drilled to walk: 'de belles femmes, oui; seulement, tenez, je n'admire ni les yeux de vache, ni de souris, ni mime ceux de verre comme ornement feminin. Avec de l'embonpoint elles font de l'effet, mais maigre il n'y a aucune illusion possible.'

This vindictive critic smarted, with cause, at the recollection of her walk out of her rooms. Jorian's audacity or infatuation quitted him immediately after he had gratified her whim. The stout Mousquetaire placed her in a corner, and enveloped her there, declaring that her petition had been that she might come to see, not to be seen,—as if, she cried out tearfully, the two wishes must not necessarily exist together, like the masculine and the feminine in this world! Prince Hal, acting the most profligate period of his career, espied her behind the Mousquetaire's moustache, and did not fail to make much of his discovery. In a perilous moment for the reputation of the Ball, my father handed him over to Gascoigne, and conducted Jenny in a leisurely walk on his arm out of the rooms.

'Il est comme les Romains,' she said: 'he never despairs of himself. It is a Jupiter! If he must punish you he confers a dignity in doing it. Now I comprehend, that with such women as these grandes dames Anglaises I should have done him harm but for his greatness of soul.'

Some harm, I fancied, must have been done, in spite of his boast to the contrary. He had to be in London every other night, and there were tales current of intrigues against him which had their sources from very lofty regions. But in Chippenden he threw off London, just as lightly as in London he discarded Chippenden. No symptom of personal discouragement, or of fatigue, was betrayed in his face. I spoke once of that paragraph purporting to emanate from Prince Ernest.

'It may,' he said. 'Business! Richie.'

Page 42

He set to counting the promises of votes, disdaining fears and reflections. Concerts, cricket-matches, Balls, dinner-parties, and the round of the canvass, and speech-making at our gatherings, occupied every minute of my time, except on Saturday evenings, when I rode over to Riversley with Temple to spend the Sunday. Temple, always willing to play second to me, and a trifle melancholy under his partial eclipse—which, perhaps, suggested the loss of Janet to him—would have it that this election was one of the realizations of our boyish dreams of greatness. The ladies were working rosettes for me. My aunt Dorothy talked very anxiously about the day appointed by my father to repay the large sum expended. All hung upon that day, she said, speaking from her knowledge of the squire. She was moved to an extreme distress by the subject.

'He is confident, Harry; but where can he obtain the money? If your grandfather sees it invested in your name in Government securities, he will be satisfied, not otherwise: nothing less will satisfy him; and if that is not done, he will join you and your father together in his mind; and as he has hitherto treated one he will treat both. I know him. He is just, to the extent of his vision; but he will not be able to separate you. He is aware that your father has not restricted his expenses since they met; he will say you should have used your influence.'

She insisted on this, until the tears streamed from her eyes, telling me that my grandfather was the most upright and unsuspecting of men, and precisely on that account the severest when he thought he had been deceived. The fair chances of my election did not console her, as it did me, by dazzling me. She affirmed strongly that she was sure my father expected success at the election to be equivalent to the promised restitution of the money, and begged me to warn him that nothing short of the sum squandered would be deemed sufficient at Riversley. My dear aunt, good woman though she was, seemed to me to be waxing miserly. The squire had given her the name of Parsimony; she had vexed him, Janet told me, by subscribing a miserable sum to a sailors' asylum that he patronized—a sum he was ashamed to see standing as the gift of a Beltham; and she had stopped the building of a wing of her village school-house, designed upon his plan. Altogether, she was fretful and distressful; she appeared to think that I could have kept my father in better order. Riversley was hearing new and strange reports of him. But how could I at Chippenden thwart his proceedings in London? Besides, he was serving me indefatigably.

It can easily be imagined what description of banter he had to meet and foil.

'This gentleman is obliging enough to ask me, "How about the Royal Arms?" If in his extreme consideration he means to indicate my Arms, I will inform him that they are open to him; he shall find entertainment for man and beast; so he is doubly assured of a welcome.'

Page 43

Questioned whether he did not think he was entitled to be rated at the value of half-a-crown, he protested that whatever might be the sum of his worth, he was pure coin, of which neither party in Chippenden could accuse the silver of rubbing off; and he offered forthwith an impromptu apologue of a copper penny that passed itself off for a crown-piece, and deceived a portion of the country: that was why (with a wave of the arm over the Hipperdon faction) it had a certain number of backers; for everybody on whom the counterfeit had been foisted, praised it to keep it in the currency.

'Now, gentlemen, I apprehend that Chippenden is not the pocket-borough for Hipperdon coin. Back with him to the Mint! and, with your permission, we will confiscate the first syllable of his name, while we consign him to oblivion, with a hip, hip, hip, hurrah for Richmond!'

The cheers responded thunderingly, and were as loud when he answered a 'How 'bout the Dauphin?' by saying that it was the Tory hotel, of which he knew nothing.

'A cheer for old Roy!' Edbury sang out.

My father checked the roar, and turned to him.

'Marquis of Edbury, come to the front!'

Edbury declined to budge, but the fellows round him edged aside to show him a mark for my father's finger.

'Gentlemen, this is the young Marquis of Edbury, a member of the House of Lords by right of his birth, born to legislate for you and me. He, gentlemen, makes our laws. Examine him, hear him, meditate on him.'

He paused cruelly for Edbury to open his mouth. The young lord looked confounded, and from that moment behaved becomingly.

'He might have been doing mischief to-morrow,' my father said to me, and by letting me conceive his adroitness a matter of design, comforted me with proofs of intelligent power, and made me feel less the melancholy conjunction of a piece of mechanism and a piece of criticism, which I was fast growing to be in the contemplation of the agencies leading to honour in our land. Edbury whipped his four-in-hand to conduct our voters to the poll. We had to pull hard against Tory interest. It was a sharp, dubious, hot day—a day of outcries against undue influence and against bribery—a day of beer and cheers and the insanest of tricks to cheat the polling-booth. Old John Thresher of Dipwell, and Farmer Eckerthy drove over to Chippenden to afford me aid and countenance, disconcerting me by the sight of them, for I associated them with Janet rather than with Otilia, and it was to Otilia that I should have felt myself rising when the figures

increased their pace in my favour, and the yeasty mob surrounding my father's superb four-horsed chariot responded to his orations by proclaiming me victor.

'I congratulate you, Mr. Richmond,' Dettermain said. 'Up to this day I have had my fears that we should haul more moonshine than fish in our net. Your father has accomplished prodigies.'

Page 44

My father, with the bloom of success on his face, led me aside soon after a safe majority of upwards of seventy had been officially announced. 'Now, Richie,' said he, 'you are a Member. Now to the squire away! Thank the multitude and off, and as quick to Sarkeld as you well can, and tell the squire from me that I pardon his suspicions. I have landed you a Member—that will satisfy him. I am willing, tell him . . . you know me competent to direct mines . . . bailiff of his estates— whatever he pleases, to effect a reconciliation. I must be in London to-night—I am in the thick of the fray there. No matter: go, my son.' He embraced me. It was not a moment for me to catechize him, though I could see that he was utterly deluded.

Between moonlight and morning, riding with Temple and Captain Bulsted on either side of me, I drew rein under the red Grange windows, tired, and in love with its air of sleepy grandeur. Janet's window was open. I hailed her. 'Has he won?' she sang out in the dark of her room, as though the cry of delight came upon the leap from bed. She was dressed. She had commissioned Farmer Eckerthy to bring her the news at any hour of the night. Seeing me, she clapped hands. 'Harry, I congratulate you a thousand times.' She had wit to guess that I should never have thought of coming had I not been the winner. I could just discern the curve and roll of her famed thick brown hair in the happy shrug of her shoulder, and imagined the full stream of it as she leaned out of window to talk to us.

Janet herself, unfastened the hall-door bolts. She caressed the horses, feverishly exulting, with charming subdued laughter of victory and welcome, and amused us by leading my horse round to stables, and whistling for one of the lads, playing what may, now and then, be a pretty feature in a young woman of character—the fair tom-boy girl. She and her maid prepared coffee and toast for us, and entered the hall, one after the other, laden with dishes of cold meat; and not until the captain had eaten well did she tell him slyly that somebody, whom she had brought to Riversley yesterday, was abed and asleep upstairs. The slyness and its sisterly innocence lit up our eyes, and our hearts laughed. Her cheeks were deliciously overcoloured. We stole I know not what from the night and the day, and conventional circumstances, and rallied Captain Bulsted, and behaved as decorous people who treat the night properly, and live by rule, do not quite do. Never since Janet was a girl had I seen her so spirited and responsive: the womanly armour of half-reserve was put away. We chatted with a fresh-hearted natural young creature who forfeited not a particle of her ladyship while she made herself our comrade in talk and frolic.

Janet and I walked part of the way to the station with Temple, who had to catch an early train, and returning—the song of skylarks covering us— joined hands, having our choice between nothing to say, and the excess; perilous both.



Page 45

CHAPTER XLIV

MY FATHER IS MIRACULOUSLY RELIEVED BY FORTUNE

My grandfather had a gratification in my success, mingled with a transparent jealousy of the chief agent in procuring it. He warned me when I left him that he was not to be hoodwinked: he must see the money standing in my name on the day appointed. His doubts were evident, but he affected to be expectant. Not a word of Sarkeld could be spoken. My success appeared to be on a more visionary foundation the higher I climbed.

Now Jorian DeWitt had affirmed that the wealthy widow Lady Sampleman was to be had by my father for the asking. Placed as we were, I regarded the objections to his alliance with her in a mild light. She might lend me the money to appease the squire; that done, I would speedily repay it. I admitted, in a letter to my aunt Dorothy, the existing objections: but the lady had long been enamoured of him, I pleaded, and he was past the age for passionate affection, and would infallibly be courteous and kind. She was rich. We might count on her to watch over him carefully. Of course, with such a wife, he would sink to a secondary social sphere; was it to be regretted if he did? The letter was a plea for my own interests, barely veiled.

At the moment of writing it, and moreover when I treated my father with especial coldness, my heart was far less warm in the contemplation of its pre-eminent aim than when I was suffering him to endanger it, almost without a protest. Janet and a peaceful Riversley, and a life of quiet English distinction, beckoned to me visibly, and not hatefully. The image of Ottilia conjured up pictures of a sea of shipwrecks, a scene of immeasurable hopelessness. Still, I strove toward that. My strivings were against my leanings, and imagining the latter, which involved no sacrifice of the finer sense of honour, to be in the direction of my lower nature, I repelled them to preserve a lofty aim that led me through questionable ways.

'Can it be you, Harry,' my aunt Dorothy's reply ran (I had anticipated her line of reasoning, though not her warmth), 'who advise him to this marriage from a motive so inexplicably unworthy? That you will repay her the money, I do not require your promise to assure me. The money is nothing. It is the prospect of her life and fortune which you are consenting, if not urging him, to imperil for your own purposes. Are you really prepared to imitate in him, with less excuse for doing it, the things you most condemn? Let it be checked at the outset. It cannot be. A marriage of inclination on both sides, prudent in a worldly sense, we might wish for him, perhaps, if he could feel quite sure of himself. His wife might persuade him not to proceed in his law-case. There I have long seen his ruin. He builds such expectations on it! You speak of something worse than a mercenary marriage. I see this in your handwriting!—your

Page 46

approval of it! I have to check the whisper that tells me it reads like a conspiracy. Is she not a simpleton? Can you withhold your pity? and pitying, can you possibly allow her to be entrapped? Forgive my seeming harshness. I do not often speak to my Harry so. I do now because I must appeal to you, as the one chiefly responsible, on whose head the whole weight of a dreadful error will fall. Oh! my dearest, be guided by the purity of your feelings to shun doubtful means. I have hopes that after the first few weeks your grandfather will—I know he does not 'expect to find the engagement fulfilled—be the same to you that he was before he discovered the extravagance. You are in Parliament, and I am certain, that by keeping as much as possible to yourself, and living soberly, your career there will persuade him to meet your wishes.'

The letter was of great length. In conclusion, she entreated me to despatch an answer by one of the early morning trains; entreating me once more to cause 'any actual deed' to be at least postponed. The letter revealed what I had often conceived might be.

My rejoinder to my aunt Dorothy laid stress on my father's pledge of his word of honour as a gentleman to satisfy the squire on a stated day. I shrank from the idea of the Riversley crow over him. As to the lady, I said we would see that her money was fastened to her securely before she committed herself to the deeps. The money to be advanced to me would lie at my bankers, in my name,—untouched: it would be repaid in the bulk after a season. This I dwelt on particularly, both to satisfy her and to appease my sense of the obligation. An airy pleasantry in the tone of this epistle amused me while writing it and vexed me when it had gone. But a letter sent, upon special request, by railway, should not, I thought, be couched in the ordinary strain. Besides one could not write seriously of a person like Lady Sampleman.

I consulted my aunt Dorothy's scruples by stopping my father on his way to the lady. His carriage was at the door: I suggested money-lenders: he had tried them all. He begged me to permit him to start: but it was too ignominious to think of its being done under my very eyes, and I refused. He had tried the money-lenders yesterday. They required a mortgage solidier than expectations for the sum we wanted. Dettermain and Newson had declined to undertake the hypothecation of his annuity. Providence pointed to Sampleman.

'You change in a couple of nights, Richie,' said he. 'Now I am always the identical man. I shall give happiness to one sincerely good soul. I have only to offer myself—let me say in becoming modesty, I believe so. Let me go to her and have it over, for with me a step taken is a thing sanctified. I have in fact held her in reserve. Not that I think Fortune has abandoned us: but a sagacious schemer will not leave everything to the worthy Dame. I should have driven to her yesterday, if I had not heard from Dettermain and Newson that there was a hint of a negotiation for a compromise. Government is fairly frightened.'

Page 47

He mused. 'However, I slept on it, and arrived at the conclusion this morning that my old Richie stood in imminent jeopardy of losing the fruit of all my toil. The good woman will advance the money to her husband. When I pledged my word to the squire I had reason to imagine the two months a sufficient time. We have still a couple of days. I have heard of men who lost heart at the eleventh hour, and if they had only hung on, with gallant faith in themselves, they would have been justified by the result. Faith works miracles. At least it allows time for them.'

His fertile ingenuity spared mine the task of persuading him to postpone the drive to Lady Sampleman. But that he would have been prompt to go, at a word from me, and was actually about to go when I entered his house, I could not question.

He drove in manifest relief of mind to Dettermain and Newson's.

I had an appointment with Mr. Temple at a great political Club, to meet the gentlemen who were good enough to undertake the introduction of the infant member to the House of Commons. My incessantly twisting circumstances foiled the pleasure and pride due to me. From the Club I bent my steps to Temple's district, and met in the street young Eckart vom Hof, my champion and second on a memorable occasion, fresh upon London, and looking very Germanic in this drab forest of our city people. He could hardly speak of Deutschland for enthusiasm at the sight of the moving masses. His object in coming to England, he assured me honestly, was to study certain editions of Tibullus in the British Museum. When he deigned to speak of Sarkeld, it was to say that Prince Hermann was frequently there. I gave him no chance to be sly, though he pushed for it, at a question of the Princess Ottilia's health.

The funeral pace of the block of cabs and omnibuses engrossed his attention. Suddenly the Englishman afforded him an example of the reserve of impetuosity we may contain. I had seen my aunt Dorothy in a middle line of cabs coming from the City, and was darting in a twinkling among wheels and shafts and nodding cab-horse noses to take her hand and know the meaning of her presence in London. She had family business to do: she said no more. I mentioned that I had checked my father for a day or two. She appeared grateful. Her anxiety was extreme that she might not miss the return train, so I relinquished her hand, commanded the cabman to hasten, and turned to rescue Eckart—too young and faithful a collegian not to follow his friend, though it were into the lion's den—from a terrific entanglement of horseflesh and vehicles brawled over by a splendid collision of tongues. Secure on the pavement again, Eckart humbly acknowledged that the English tongue could come out upon occasions. I did my best to amuse him.

Page 48

Whether it amused him to see me take my seat in the House of Commons, and hear a debate in a foreign language, I cannot say; but the only pleasure of which I was conscious at that period lay in the thought that he or his father, Baron vom Hof, might some day relate the circumstance at Prince Ernest's table, and fix in Ottilia's mind the recognition of my having tried to perform my part of the contract. Beggared myself, and knowing Prince Hermann to be in Sarkeld, all I hoped for was to show her I had followed the path she traced. My state was lower: besides misfortune I now found myself exalted only to feel my profound insignificance.

'The standard for the House is a man's ability to do things,' said Charles Etherell, my friendly introducer, by whom I was passingly, perhaps ironically, advised to preserve silence for two or three sessions.

He counselled the study of Foreign Affairs for a present theme. I talked of our management of them, in the strain of Dr. Julius von Karsteg.

'That's journalism, or clippings from a bilious essay; it won't do for the House,' he said. 'Revile the House to the country, if you like, but not the country to the House.'

When I begged him to excuse my absurdity, he replied:

'It's full of promise, so long as you're silent.'

But to be silent was to be merely an obedient hound of the whip. And if the standard for the House was a man's ability to do things, I was in the seat of a better man. External sarcasms upon the House, flavoured with justness, came to my mind, but if these were my masters surrounding me, how indefinitely small must I be!

Leaving the House on that first night of my sitting, I received Temple's congratulations outside, and, as though the sitting had exhausted every personal sentiment, I became filled with his; under totally new sensations, I enjoyed my distinction through the perception of my old comrade's friendly jealousy.

'I'll be there, too, some day,' he said, moaning at the prospect of an extreme age before such honours would befall him.

The society of Eckart prevented me from urging him to puff me up with his talk as I should have wished, and after I had sent the German to be taken care of by Mrs. Waddy, I had grown so accustomed to the worldly view of my position that I was fearing for its stability. Threats of a petition against me were abroad. Supposing the squire disinherited me, could I stand? An extraordinary appetite for wealth, a novel appreciation of it—which was, in truth, a voluntary enlistment into the army of mankind, and the adoption of its passions—pricked me with an intensity of hope and dread concerning my dependence on my grandfather. I lay sleepless all night, tossing from

Riversley to Sarkeld, condemned, it seemed, to marry Janet and gain riches and power by renouncing my hope of the princess and the glory belonging to her, unless I should within a few hours obtain a show of figures at my bankers.

Page 49

I had promised Etherell to breakfast with him. A note—a faint scream—despatched by Mrs. Waddy to Mr. Temple's house informed me that 'the men' were upon them. If so, they were the forerunners of a horde, and my father was as good as extinguished. He staked everything on success; consequently, he forfeited pity.

Good-bye to ambition, I thought, and ate heartily, considering robustly the while how far lower than the general level I might avoid falling. The report of the debates in morning papers—doubtless, more flowing and, perhaps, more grammatical than such as I gave ear to overnight—had the odd effect on me of relieving me from the fit of subserviency into which the speakers had sunk me.

A conceit of towering superiority took its place, and as Etherell was kind enough to draw me out and compliment me, I was attacked by a tragic sense of contrast between my capacities and my probable fortunes. It was open to me to marry Janet. But this meant the loosening of myself with my own hand for ever from her who was my mentor and my glory, to gain whom I was in the very tideway. I could not submit to it, though the view was like that of a green field of the springs passed by a climber up the crags. I went to Anna Penrhys to hear a woman's voice, and partly told her of my troubles. She had heard Mr. Hipperdon express his confident opinion that he should oust me from my seat. Her indignation was at my service as a loan: it sprang up fiercely and spontaneously in allusions to something relating to my father, of which the Marquis of Edbury had been guilty. 'How you can bear it!' she exclaimed, for I was not wordy. The exclamation, however, stung me to put pen to paper—the woman was not so remote in me as not to be roused by the woman. I wrote to Edbury, and to Heriot, bidding him call on the young nobleman. Late at night I was at my father's door to perform the act of duty of seeing him, and hearing how he had entertained Eckart, if he was still master of his liberty. I should have known him better: I expected silence and gloom. The windows were lighted brilliantly. As the hall-door opened, a band of stringed and wood instruments commenced an overture. Mrs. Waddy came to me in the hall; she was unintelligible. One thing had happened to him at one hour of the morning, and another at another hour. He was at one moment suffering the hands of the 'officers' on his shoulder:

'And behold you, Mr. Harry! a knock, a letter from a messenger, and he conquers Government!' It struck me that the epitome of his life had been played in a day: I was quite incredulous of downright good fortune. He had been giving a dinner followed by a concert, and the deafening strains of the music clashed with my acerb spirit, irritating me excessively. 'Where are those men you spoke of?' I asked her. 'Gone,' she replied, 'gone long ago!'

'Paid?' said I.

She was afraid to be precise, but repeated that they were long since gone.

Page 50

I singled Jorian DeWitt from among the crowd of loungers on the stairs and landing between the drawing-rooms. 'Oh, yes, Government has struck its flag to him,' Jorian said. 'Why weren't you here to dine? Alphonse will never beat his achievement of to-day. Jenny and Carigny gave us a quarter-of-an-hour before dinner—a capital idea!—"VEUVE et BACHELIER." As if by inspiration. No preparation for it, no formal taking of seats. It seized amazingly—floated small talk over the soup beautifully.'

I questioned him again.

'Oh, dear, yes; there can't be a doubt about it,' he answered, airily. 'Roy Richmond has won his game.'

Two or three urgent men round a great gentleman were extracting his affable approbation of the admirable nature of the experiment of the Chassediane before dinner. I saw that Eckart was comfortably seated, and telling Jorian to provide for him in the matter of tobacco, I went to my room, confused beyond power of thought by the sensible command of fortune my father, fortune's sport at times, seemed really to have.

His statement of the circumstances bewildered me even more. He was in no hurry to explain them; when we met next morning he waited for me to question him, and said, 'Yes. I think we have beaten them so far!' His mind was pre-occupied, he informed me, concerning the defence of a lady much intrigued against, and resuming the subject: 'Yes, we have beaten them up to a point, Richie. And that reminds me: would you have me go down to Riversley and show the squire the transfer paper? At any rate you can now start for Sarkeld, and you do, do you not? To-day: to-morrow at latest.'

I insisted: 'But how, and in what manner has this money been paid?' The idea struck me that he had succeeded in borrowing it.

'Transferred to me in the Bank, and intelligence of the fact sent to Dettermain and Newson, my lawyers,' he replied. 'Beyond that, I know as little as you, Richie, though indubitably I hoped to intimidate them. If,' he added, with a countenance perfectly simple and frank, 'they expect me to take money for a sop, I am not responsible, as I by no means provoked it, for their mistake.'

'I proceed. The money is useful to you, so I rejoice at it.'

Five and twenty thousand pounds was the amount.

'No stipulation was attached to it?'

'None. Of course a stipulation was implied: but of that I am not bound to be cognizant.'

'Absurd!' I cried: 'it can't have come from the quarter you suspect.'

‘Where else?’ he asked.

I thought of the squire, Lady Edbury, my aunt, Lady Sampleman, Anna Penrhys, some one or other of his frantic female admirers. But the largeness of the amount, and the channel selected for the payment, precluded the notion that any single person had come to succour him in his imminent need, and, as it chanced, mine.

Observing that my speculations wavered, he cited numerous instances in his life of the special action of Providence in his favour, and was bold enough to speak of a star, which his natural acuteness would have checked his doing before me, if his imagination had not been seriously struck.

Page 51

'You hand the money over to me, sir?' I said.

'Without a moment of hesitation, my dear boy,' he melted me by answering.

'You believe you have received a bribe?'

'That is my entire belief—the sole conclusion I can arrive at. I will tell you, Richie: the old Marquis of Edbury once placed five thousand pounds to my account on a proviso that I should—neglect, is the better word, my Case. I inherited from him at his death; of course his demise cancelled the engagement. He had been the friend of personages implicated. He knew. I suspect he apprehended the unpleasant position of a witness.'

'But what was the stipulation you presume was implied?' said I.

'Something that passed between lawyers: I am not bound to be cognizant of it. Abandon my claims for a few thousands? Not for ten, not for ten hundred times the sum!'

To be free from his boisterous influence, which made my judgement as unsteady as the weather-glass in a hurricane, I left my house and went straight to Dettermain and Newson, who astonished me quite as much by assuring me that the payment of the money was a fact. There was no mystery about it. The intelligence and transfer papers, they said, had not been communicated to them by the firm they were opposed to, but by a solicitor largely connected with the aristocracy; and his letter had briefly declared the unknown donator's request that legal proceedings should forthwith be stopped. They offered no opinion of their own. Suggestions of any kind, they seemed to think, had weight, and all of them an equal weight, to conclude from the value they assigned to every idea of mine. The name of the solicitor in question was Charles Adolphus Bannerbridge. It was, indeed, my old, one of my oldest friends; the same by whom I had been led to a feast and an evening of fun when a little fellow starting in the London streets. Sure of learning the whole truth from old Mr. Bannerbridge, I walked to his office and heard that he had suddenly been taken ill. I strode on to his house, and entered a house of mourning. The kind old man, remembered by me so vividly, had died overnight. Miss Bannerbridge perceived that I had come on an errand, and with her gentle good breeding led me to speak of it. She knew nothing whatever of the sum of money. She was, however, aware that an annuity had been regularly paid through the intervention of her father. I was referred by her to a Mr. Richards, his recently-established partner. This gentleman was ignorant of the whole transaction.

Throughout the day I strove to combat the pressure of evidence in favour of the idea that an acknowledgement of special claims had been wrested from the enemy. Temple hardly helped me, though his solid sense was dead against the notions entertained by my father and Jorian DeWitt, and others besides, our elders. The payment of the sum through the same channel which supplied the annuity, pointed distinctly to an admission

Page 52

of a claim, he inclined to think, and should be supposed to come from a personage having cause either to fear him or to assist him. He set my speculations astray by hinting that the request for the stopping of the case might be a blind. A gift of money, he said shrewdly, was a singularly weak method of inducing a man to stop the suit of a lifetime. I thought of Lady Edbury; but her income was limited, and her expenditure was not of Lady Sampleman, but it was notorious that she loved her purse as well as my aunt Dorothy, and was even more, in the squire's phrase, 'a petticoated parsimony.' Anna Penrhys appeared the likelier, except for the fact that the commencement of the annuity was long before our acquaintance with her. I tried her on the subject. Her amazement was without a shadow of reserve. 'It 's Welsh, it's not English,' she remarked. I knew no Welshwoman save Anna.

'Do you know the whole of his history?' said she. Possibly one of the dozen unknown episodes in it might have furnished the clue, I agreed with her.

The sight of twenty-one thousand pounds placed to my credit in the Funds assuaged my restless spirit of investigation. Letters from the squire and my aunt Dorothy urged me to betake myself to Riversley, there finally to decide upon what my course should be.

'Now that you have the money, pray,' St. Parsimony wrote,—'pray be careful of it. Do not let it be encroached on. Remember it is to serve one purpose. It should be guarded strictly against every appeal for aid,' etc., with much underlining.

My grandfather returned the papers. His letter said 'I shall not break my word. Please to come and see me before you take steps right or left.'

So here was the dawn again.

I could in a day or two start for Sarkeld. Meanwhile, to give my father a lesson, I discharged a number of bills, and paid off the bond to which Edbury's name was attached. My grandfather, I knew, was too sincerely and punctiliously a gentleman in practical conduct to demand a further inspection of my accounts. These things accomplished, I took the train for Riversley, and proceeded from the station to Durstan, where I knew Heriot to be staying. Had I gone straight to my grandfather, there would have been another story to tell.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Bandied the weariful shuttlecock of gallantry
Determine that the future is in our debt, and draw on it



Faith works miracles. At least it allows time for them
He whipped himself up to one of his oratorical frenzies
I was discontented, and could not speak my discontent
No Act to compel a man to deny what appears in the papers
Puns are the smallpox of the language
Stultification of one's feelings and ideas
They dare not. The more I dare, the less dare they
Too prompt, too full of personal relish of his point