SAMUEL WARREN

TEN THOUSAND A-YEAR. VOLUME 2

Samuel Warren

Ten Thousand a-Year. Volume 2

Warren S.

Ten Thousand a-Year. Volume 2 / S. Warren — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER I 5
CHAPTER II 19
CHAPTER III 32
CHAPTER IV 45
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. 60

Samuel Warren
Ten Thousand a-Year. Volume 2

CHAPTER I

"The Attorney-General did his work very fairly, I thought—eh, Lynx?" said Mr. Subtle, as arm-in-arm with Mr. Lynx, he quitted the Castle-gates, each of them on his way to their respective lodgings, to prepare for the next day's work.

"Yes—he's a keen hand, to be sure: he's given us *all* work enough; and I must say, it's been a capital set-to between you! I'm *very* glad you got the verdict!"

"It wouldn't have done to be beaten on one's own dung-hill, as it were—eh? By the way, Lynx, that was a good hit of yours about the erasure—I ought, really, if it had occurred to me at the time, to have given you the credit of it—'twas entirely yours, Lynx, I must say."

"Oh, no!"—replied Lynx, modestly. "It was a mere accident my lighting on it; the merit was, the use you made of it!"

"To think of ten thousand a-year turning on that same trumpery erasure!"–

"But are you sure of our verdict on that ground, Mr. Subtle? Do you think Lord Widdrington was right in rejecting that deed?"[1]

"Right? to be sure he was! But I own I got rather uneasy at the way the Attorney-General put it—that the estate had once been vested, and could not be subsequently de-vested by an alteration or blemish in the instrument evidencing the passing of the estate—eh? that was a good point, Lynx."

"Ay, but as Lord Widdrington put it—that could be only where the defect was proved to exist after a complete and valid deed had been once established."

"True—true; that's the answer, Lynx; here, you see, the deed is disgraced in the first instance; no proof, in fact, that it ever *was* a deed—therefore, mere waste paper."

"To be sure, *possession* has gone along with the deed"–

"Possession gone along with it!—What then?—That is to say, the man who has altered it, to benefit himself and his heirs, keeps it snugly in his own chest—and then that is of itself to be sufficient to"–

"Ay—but what I'm afraid of, is this: that the presumption of forgery arising from the alteration, is overcome by the presumption to the contrary, arising from long-continued and consistent possession!—On the other hand, however, it is certainly a general rule that the party producing an instrument must account for the appearance of erasure or alteration, to encounter the presumption of fraud!—I must say *that* seems good sense enough!"…

"It's really been a very interesting cause," said Mr. Subtle.

"Very. Some capital points—that of Mortmain's on the stamp act"–

"Pish, Lynx! there's nothing in it! I meant the cause itself has been an interesting one—uncommonly."

Mr. Subtle suddenly paused and stood still. "God bless my soul, Lynx—I've made a blunder!"

"Eh!"

"Yes—by Jove, a blunder! Never did such a thing since I've led a cause before!"

"A blunder? Impossible!—What is it?" inquired Lynx, briskly, pricking up his ears.

"It will be at least thirty or forty pounds out of our client's pocket. I forgot to ask Widdrington for the certificate for the costs of the special jury. I protest I never did such a thing before—I'm quite annoyed—I hate to *overlook* anything."

---

[1] Note 1. Page 1.See *post*, Chapter V., Preliminary Note.

"Oh! is that all?" inquired Lynx, much relieved—"then it's all right! While you were speaking to Mr. Gammon, immediately after the verdict had been given, I turned towards Quicksilver to get him to ask for the certificate—but he had seen a man with the new 'Times' containing the Division on the Catholic claims, and had set off after him—so I took the liberty, as you seemed very earnestly talking to Mr. Gammon, to name it to the judge—and it's all right."

"Capital!—Then there isn't a single point missed!—And in a good two days' fight that's something."

"D'ye think we shall keep the verdict, and get its fruits?"

"We shall keep the verdict, I've no doubt; there's nothing in Widdrington's notes that we need be afraid of—but of course the Aubreys will put us to bring another ejectment, perhaps several."

"Yes—certainly—there *must* be a good deal of fighting before such a property as Yatton changes hands," replied Lynx, with a complacent air; for he saw a few pleasant pickings in store for him. "By the way," he continued, "our client's a sweet specimen of humanity, isn't he?"

"Faugh! odious little reptile! And did you ever in all your life witness such a scene as when he interrupted me in the way he did?"

"Ha, ha! Never! But, upon my honor, what an exquisite turn you gave the thing—it was worth more than called it forth—it was admirable."

"Pooh—Lynx!" said Mr. Subtle, with a gratified air; "knack—mere knack—nothing more. My voice trembled—eh?—at least so I intended."

"Upon my soul, I almost believed you were for the moment overcome, and going to shed tears."

"Ah, ha, ha!—Delightful! I was convulsed with inward laughter! *Shed tears!!* Did the bar take it, Lynx?" inquired Mr. Subtle; for though he hated display, he loved *appreciation*, and by competent persons. "By the way, Lynx, the way in which you've got up the whole case does you vast credit—that opinion of yours on the evidence was—upon my word—the most masterly"—here he suddenly ceased and squeezed his companion's arm, motioning him thereby to silence. They had come up with two gentlemen, walking slowly, and conversing in a low tone, but with much earnestness of manner. They were, in fact, Mr. Aubrey and Lord De la Zouch. Mr. Subtle and Mr. Lynx crossed over to the other side of the narrow street, and quickened their pace, so as soon to be out of sight and hearing of the persons they seemed desirous of avoiding. Mr. Subtle was, indeed, unable to bear the sight of the man whom his strenuous and splendid exertions during the last two days had tended to strip of his all—to thrust from the bright domain of wealth, prosperity, distinction, into—as it were—outer darkness—the outer darkness of poverty—of destitution.

"It's rather a nuisance for the Aubreys—isn't it?" quoth the matter-of-fact Lynx.

"It's quite frightful!"—replied Mr. Subtle, in a tone of voice and with a manner which showed how deeply he felt what he uttered. "And it's not only what Mr. Aubrey will lose, but what he will be liable to—the mesne profits—sixty thousand pounds."

"Oh!—you think, then, that we can't go beyond the *statute of limitations*?—Eh?—is that so clear?" Mr. Subtle looked sharply at Lynx, with an expression it would be difficult to describe. "Well"—continued the impenetrable Lynx—"at all events, I'll look into it." He felt about as much *sentiment* in the matter as a hog eating acorns would feel interest in the antiquity of the oak from which they fell, and under whose venerable shade he was munching and stuffing himself.

"By the way, Lynx—aren't you with me in *Higson and Mellington*?"

"Yes—and it stands first for to-morrow morning!"

"I've not opened my papers, and—why, we've a consultation fixed for ten o'clock to-night! What's it all about?"

"It's *libel* against a newspaper editor—the Pomfret Cockatrice; and our client's a clergyman. They've slandered him most abominably: they say he entered the church as a wholesale dealer in tithes—and as to religion—is an unbeliever and hypocrite!"

"Ay, ay?—that sounds a little like substantial damages!—Do they *justify*?"[2]

"No—they've pleaded not guilty only."

"Who leads for the defender?"

"Mr. Quicksilver."

"Oh!—very well. We must have the consultation to-morrow morning, at the Robing-room—ten minutes before the sitting of the court. I'm rather tired to-night." With this the great leader shook hands with his modest, learned, laborious junior—and entered his lodgings.

As soon as Titmouse had been ejected from the court, in the summary way which the reader will recollect, merely on account of his having, with some slight indecorum, yielded to the mighty impulse of his agitated feelings, he began to cry bitterly, wringing his hands, and asking every one about him if they thought he could get in again, because it was "*his* case" that was going on. His eyes were red and swollen with weeping; and his little breast throbbed violently as he walked to and fro from one door of the court to the other. "Oh, gents, will you get me in again?" said he, in passionate tones, approaching two gentlemen, who, with a very anxious and oppressed air, were standing together at the outside of one of the doors—in fact, Lord De la Zouch and Mr. Aubrey; and they quickly recognized in Titmouse the gentleman whose claims were being at that instant mooted within the court. "*Will* you get me in? You seem such *respectable* gents—'Pon my soul I'm going mad! It's my case that's going on! I'm Mr. Titmouse"–

"We have no power, sir, to get you in," replied Lord De la Zouch, haughtily: so coldly and sternly as to cause Titmouse involuntarily to shrink from him.

"The court is crowded to the very door, sir—and we really have no more right to be present in court, or get others into court, than you have," said Mr. Aubrey, with mildness and dignity.

---

[2] Note 2. Page 5.An important and salutary improvement in the law of libel, especially in the case of newspapers, was effected in 1843, by statute 6 and 7 Vict. c. 96. Till then the TRUTH was inadmissible as a *justification* on a criminal prosecution for libel—the rule being that the greater the truth the greater was the libel—by which was meant its greater tendency to a breach of the peace. Now, however, the defendant may *defend* himself against an indictment or information, by pleading that the charge was true, and that it was for the public benefit that it should have been published; but he must specially state in his plea the particular facts by reason of which it was for the public benefit. If such plea, or evidence in support of it, should be false or malicious, the act allows that circumstance to be taken into consideration in awarding punishment. A serious amount of fine, imprisonment, and hard labor, may be inflicted for publishing, or threatening (with intent to extort money) to publish, a false and malicious libel. In *civil* proceedings a defendant may plead that he was not guilty of *actual* malice or *gross* negligence; and offered to publish, or published, a full apology, in which case he may pay money into court by way of amends; and in all actions of defamation he may show an apology, or offer of one, in mitigation of damages. This statute does not extend to Scotland.Troilus and Cressida, i. 3.The great increase of business alone, is the cause of the accumulation of arrears—especially in the Queen's Bench, which is almost overpowered by the enormous pressure of its criminal business. All the three superior courts have recently adopted post-terminal fittings, to enable them to despatch their arrears; an act of Parliament having been passed (stat. 1 and 2 Vict. c. 32) for that purpose.If the reader will refer to vol. i. p. 490, he may see how the *disabilities* here alluded to arose, and affected the case. The doctrine of "adverse possession" is founded on the anxiety of our law to secure quietude of title. It gives every reasonable facility for the assertion of just rights against wrongful possessors of property; but with equal reasonableness fixes a limit to immunity from the consequences of negligent acquiescence under usurpation, considering it, in a word, better policy to protect a person in possession, than to encourage a struggle for it among strangers. *Vigilantibus non dormientibus jura subveniunt*, is the maxim of the common law, on which also the statute law has often acted, and recently with great effect, by stat. 3 and 4 Will. 4, c. 27, (passed on the 24th July 1833.) By its provisions, many of the most subtle and difficult questions concerning the nature of "possession" are got rid of; and the period of twenty years from the commencement of the rights of possession, fixed as that within which alone an action or suit in equity for the recovery of lands must be brought—unless a party was, when his right accrued, laboring under the *disability* of infancy, coverture, insanity, or absence beyond seas: in any of which cases an extension of *ten* years is allowed: but it is expressly provided, that however numerous such disabilities may have been—however long and uninterruptedly they may have lasted—*forty* years shall be absolutely the limit within which the action or suit must be brought from the time of the *right first accruing*. If the statute "once begin to run," as the lawyers say, "nothing can stop it." The above constitute some of the boldest and best of the great alterations recently effected in our English system of real property law. A far longer period than the present one was requisite to constitute "adverse possession" at the time mentioned in the text.See *post*, Chapter V., Preliminary Note."[Greek: 'Anthropinos]," signifies in this place, (1 Corinth. x. 13,) says a commentator on this memorable passage of Scripture, "such as is suited to the nature and circumstances of man; such as every man may reasonably expect, if he consider the nature of his body and soul, and his situation in the present world."

"Thank you, sir! Thank you!" quoth Titmouse, moving with an apprehensive air away from Lord De la Zouch, towards Mr. Aubrey, "Know quite well who you are, sir! 'Pon my solemn soul, sir, sorry to do all this; but law's law, and right's right, all the world over!"

"I *desire* you to leave us, sir," said Lord De la Zouch, with irrepressible sternness; "you are very intrusive. How can we catch a syllable of what is going on while you are chattering in this way?" Titmouse saw that Mr. Aubrey looked towards him with a very different expression from that exhibited by his forbidding companion, and would perhaps have stood his ground, but for a glimpse he caught of a huge, powdered, broad-shouldered footman, in a splendid livery, one of Lord De la Zouch's servants, who, with a great thick silver-headed cane in his hand, was standing at a little distance behind, in attendance on the carriage, which was in the Castle-yard. This man's face looked so ready for mischief, that Titmouse slowly walked off. There were a good many standers-by, who seemed all to look with dislike and distrust at Titmouse. He made many ineffectual attempts to persuade the doorkeeper, who had assisted in his extrusion, to readmit him; but the incorruptible janitor was proof against a sixpence—even against a shilling; and at length Titmouse gave himself up to despair, and thought himself the most miserable man in the whole world—as very probably, indeed, he was: for consider what a horrid interval of suspense he had to endure, from the closing of Mr. Subtle's speech, till the delivery of the verdict. But at length, through this portentous and apparently impenetrable cloud burst the rich sunlight of success.

"Mr. Titmouse!—Mr. Titmouse!—Mr. Tit"–

"Here! Here I am! Here!"—exclaimed the little wretch, jumping off the window-seat on which he had been sitting for the last hour in the dark, half-stupefied with grief and exhaustion. The voice which called him was a blessed voice—a familiar voice—the voice of Mr. Gammon; who, as soon as the jury had begun to come back, on some pretence or other had quitted his seat between Quirk and Snap, in order, if the verdict should be for the plaintiff, to be the very first to communicate it to him. In a moment or two Mr. Gammon had grasped both Mr. Titmouse's hands. "My dear, dear Mr. Titmouse, I congratulate you! You are victorious! God grant you long life to enjoy your good fortune! God bless you, Titmouse!" He wrung Titmouse's hands—and his voice trembled with the intensity of his emotions! Mr. Titmouse had grown very white, and for a while spoke not, but stood staring at Mr. Gammon, as if hardly aware of the import of his communication.

"No—but—is it so? Honor bright?" at length he stammered.

"It is indeed! My long labors are at length crowned with success!—Hurrah, hurrah, Mr. Titmouse!"

"I've really *won*? It a'n't a joke or a dream?" inquired Titmouse, with quickly increasing excitement, and a joyous expression bursting over his features, which became suddenly flushed.

"A joke?—the best you'll ever have. A dream?—that will last your life. Thank God, Mr. Titmouse, the battle's ours; we've defeated all their villany!"

"Tol de rol! Tol de rol! Tol de lol, lol, lol, rido!—Ah," he added in a loud truculent tone, as Lord De la Zouch and Mr. Aubrey slowly passed him—"done for you now—'pon my life!—turned the tables!—*that* for you!" said he, snapping his fingers; but I need hardly say that he did so with perfect impunity, as far as those two gentlemen were concerned, who were so absorbed with the grievous event which had just happened, as scarcely to be aware of their being addressed at all.

"Aubrey, it's against you—all is lost; the verdict is for the plaintiff!" said Lord De la Zouch, in a hurried agitated whisper, as he grasped the hand of Mr. Aubrey, whom he had quitted for an instant to hear the verdict pronounced. Mr. Aubrey for some moments spoke not.

"God's will be done!" at length said he, in a low tone, or rather in a faint murmur. More than a dozen gentlemen, who came crowding out, grasped his hand with fervent energy.

"God bless you, Aubrey! God bless you!" said several voices, their speakers wringing his hands with great vehemence as they spoke.

"Let us go"—said Lord De la Zouch, putting Mr. Aubrey's arm in his own, and leading him away from a scene of distressing excitement, too powerful for his exhausted feelings.

"I am nothing of a fatalist," said Mr. Aubrey, after a considerable pause, during which they had quitted the Castle-gates, and his feelings had recovered from the shock which they had just before suffered;—"I am nothing of a fatalist, but I ought not to feel the least surprise at this issue, for I have long had a settled conviction that such *would* be the issue. For some time before I had the least intimation of the commencement of these proceedings, I was oppressed by a sense of impending calamity"–

"Well, that may be so; but it does not follow that the mischief is finally *done*."

"I am certain of it!—But, dear Lord De la Zouch, how much I owe to your kindness and sympathy!" said Mr. Aubrey, with a slight tremor in his voice.

"We are at this moment, Aubrey, firmer friends than we ever were before. So help me Heaven! I would not lose your friendship for the world; I feel it a greater honor than I am worthy of—I do, indeed," said Lord De la Zouch, with great emotion.

"There's a great gulf between us, though, Lord De la Zouch, as far as worldly circumstances are concerned—you a peer of the realm, I a beggar!"

"Forgive me, Aubrey, but it is idle to talk in that way; I am hurt beyond measure at your supposing it possible that under any circumstances"–

"Believe me, I feel the full value of your friendship—more valuable at this moment than ever!"

"That a serious calamity has fallen upon you is certain;—which of us, indeed, is safe from such a calamity? But who would bear it with the calm fortitude which *you* have already evinced, my dear Aubrey?"

"You speak very kindly, Lord De la Zouch; I trust I shall play the man, now that the time for playing a man's part has come," said Mr. Aubrey, with an air of mingled melancholy and resolution. "I feel an inexpressible consolation in the reflection, that I cannot charge myself with anything unconscientious; and, as for the future, I put my trust in God. I feel as if I could submit to the will of Heaven with cheerfulness"–

"Don't speak so despondingly, Aubrey"–

"Despondingly?" echoed Mr. Aubrey, with momentary animation—"Despondingly? My dear friend, I feel as if I were indeed entering a scene black as midnight—but what is it to the *valley of the shadow of death*, dear Lord De la Zouch, which is before all of us, and at but a little distance! I assure you I feel no vain-glorious confidence; yet I seem to be leaning on the arm of an unseen but all-powerful supporter!"

"You are a hero, my dear Aubrey!" exclaimed Lord De la Zouch, with sudden fervor.

"And that support will embrace those dearer to me than life—dearer—far—far"–He ceased; his feelings quite overcame him, and they walked on for some time in silence. Soon afterwards they parted—for Lord De la Zouch perceived that his unfortunate companion wished to be alone. He wrung Mr. Aubrey's hands in silence; and having turned in the direction of his hotel, Mr. Aubrey made for his lodgings. The streets were occupied by passengers, some returning from the Castle after the great trial of the day; others standing here and there, in little knots, conversing as he passed them; and he felt conscious that the subject of their thoughts and conversation was himself and his fallen fortunes. Several deep-drawn sighs escaped him, as he walked on, the herald of such dismal tidings, to those whom he loved; and he felt but for that which supported him from within, as it were, a fallen angel, so far as concerned this world's honors and greatness. The splendors of human pomp and prosperity seemed rapidly vanishing in the distance. In the temporary depression of his spirits, he experienced feelings somewhat akin to those of the heart-sickened exile, whose fond eyes are riveted upon the mosques and minarets of his native city, glittering in the soft sunlight of evening, where are the cherished objects of all his tenderest thoughts and feelings; while his vessel is rapidly bearing him from it, amid the rising wind, the increasing and ominous swell of the waters, the thickening gloom

of night—*whither*? The Minster clock struck ten as he passed one of the corners of the vast majestic structure, gray-glistening in the faint moonlight. The melodious chimes echoed in his ear, and smote his subdued soul with a sense of peculiar solemnity and awe; they forced upon him a reflection upon the transient littleness of earthly things. Then he thought of those dear beings who were awaiting his return, and a gush of grief and tenderness overflowed his heart, as he quickened his steps, with an inward and fervent prayer that Heaven would support them under the misfortune which had befallen them. As he neared the retired row of houses where his lodgings were situated, he imagined that he saw some one near the door, as if on the look-out for his approach; and who, as he drew nearer, suddenly entered them, and closed the door. This was a person whom Mr. Aubrey did not at all suspect —it was his worthy friend Dr. Tatham; who, unable to quit Yatton in time to hear the trial, had early that morning mounted his horse, and after a long and hard ride, reached York soon after Mr. Aubrey had set off for the Castle. Though many of the county people then in York were aware that Mrs. and Miss Aubrey were also there, a delicate consideration for their exquisitely distressing situation restrained them from intruding upon their privacy, which had been evidently sought for by the species of lodgings which Mr. Aubrey had engaged. On the second day, the excellent Dr. Tatham had been their welcome and instructive guest, scarce ever leaving them; Mr. Aubrey's groom bringing word, from time to time, from his master, how the trial went on. Late in the evening, urged by Kate, the doctor had gone off to the Castle, to wait till he could bring intelligence of the final result of the trial. He had not been observed by Mr. Aubrey amid the number of people who were about; and had at length fulfilled his mission, and been beforehand with Mr. Aubrey in communicating the unfortunate issue of the struggle. The instant that Mr. Aubrey had set his foot within the door, he was locked in the impassioned embrace of his wife and sister. None of them spoke for some moments.

"Dearest Charles!—we've heard it all—we know it all!" at length they exclaimed in a breath. "Thank God, it is over at last—and we know the worst!—Are you well, dearest Charles?" inquired Mrs. Aubrey, with fond anxiety.

"Thank God, my Agnes, I am well!" said Mr. Aubrey, much excited—"and thank God that the dreadful suspense is at an end; and also for the fortitude, my sweet loves, with which you bear the result. And how are *you*, my excellent friend?" continued he, addressing Dr. Tatham, and grasping his hands; "my venerable and pious friend—how it refreshes my heart to see you! as one of the chosen ministers of that God whose creatures we are, and whose dispensations we receive with reverent submission!"

"God Almighty bless you all, my dear friends!" replied Dr. Tatham, powerfully affected. "Believe that all this is from Him! He has wise ends in view, though we see not nor comprehend them! *Faint not when you are rebuked of Him! If ye faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small!* But I rejoice to see your resignation!"—Aubrey, his wife, and sister, were for a while overcome with their emotions.

"I assure you all," said Aubrey, "I feel as if a very mountain had been lifted off my heart! How blessed am I in such a wife and sister!" A heavenly smile irradiated his pale features—and he clasped his wife, and then his sister, in his arms. They wept as they tenderly returned his embrace.

"God," said he, "that gave us all, has taken all: why should we murmur? He will enable us, if we pray for His assistance, to bear with equanimity our present adversity, as well as our past prosperity! Come, Agnes! Kate! play the woman!"

Dr. Tatham sat silent by; but the tears ran down his cheeks. At length Mr. Aubrey gave them a general account of what had occurred at the trial—and which, I need hardly say, was listened to in breathless silence.

"Who is that letter from, love, lying on the table?" inquired Mr. Aubrey, during a pause in the conversation.

"It's only from Johnson—dearest!—to say the children are quite well," replied Mrs. Aubrey. The ruined parents, as if by a common impulse, looked unutterable things at each other. Then the

mother turned deadly pale; and her husband tenderly kissed her cold cheek; while Kate could scarcely restrain her feelings. The excitement of each was beginning to give way before sheer bodily and mental exhaustion; and Dr. Tatham, observing it, rose to take his departure. It was arranged that the carriage should be at the door by eight o'clock in the morning, to convey them back to Yatton—and that Dr. Tatham should breakfast with them, and afterwards accompany them on horseback. He then took his departure for the night, with a very full heart; and those whom he had left, soon afterwards retired for the night; and having first invoked the mercy and pity of Heaven, sank into slumber and brief forgetfulness of the perilous position in which they had been placed by the event of the day.

Somewhat different was the mode in which the night was spent by the victorious party. Gammon, as has been seen, was the first to congratulate Titmouse on his splendid success. The next was old Quirk—who, with a sort of conviction that he should find Gammon beforehand with him—bustled out of court, leaving Snap to pay the jury, settle the court-fees, collect the papers, and so forth. Both Quirk and Snap (as soon as the latter was at liberty) exhibited a courtesy towards Titmouse which had a strong dash of reverence in it, such as was due to the possessor of ten thousand a-year; but Gammon exhibited the tranquil matter-of-fact confidence of a man who had determined to be, and indeed knew that he *was*, the entire master of Titmouse.

"I—wish you'd call a coach, or something of that sort, gents.—I'm devilish tired—I am, 'pon my soul!" said Mr. Titmouse, yawning, as he stood on the steps between Quirk and Gammon, waiting for Snap's arrival. He was, in fact, almost beside himself—bursting with excitement; and could not stand still for a moment. Now he whistled loudly, and boldly; then he hummed a bar or two of some low comic song; and repeatedly drew on and off his damp gloves, with an air of petulant impetuosity. Now he ran his hand through his hair with careless grace; and then, with arms folded on his breast for a moment, looked eagerly, but with a would-be languid air, at two or three elegant equipages, which, one by one, with their depressed and disappointed occupants, rolled off. At length, Lord Widdrington, amid a sharp impetuous cry of "Make way for the judge there—make way for my Lord!" appeared in his robes, (holding his three-cornered hat in his hand,) with a wearied air; and passing close by Titmouse, was honored by him with a very fine bow indeed—his Lordship not being, however, in the least aware of the fact—as he passed on to his carriage. The steps were drawn up; the door was closed; and amid a sharp blast of trumpets, the carriage drove slowly off, preceded and followed by the usual attendants. All this pomp and ceremony made a very deep impression upon the mind of Titmouse. "Ah," thought he, with a sudden sigh of mingled excitement and exhaustion —"who knows but *I* may be a judge some day? It's a devilish pleasant thing, I'm sure! What a fuss he must make wherever he goes! 'Pon my life, quite delightful!" As there was no coach to be had, Mr. Titmouse was forced to walk home, arm-in-arm with Mr. Quirk and Mr. Gammon, and followed, at a little distance, by a knot of persons, acquainted with his name and person, and feeling towards him a strange mixture of emotions—dislike, wonder, contempt, admiration. Goodness gracious! that strange little gentleman was now worth, it was said, ten thousand a-year; and was squire of Yatton!! Old Quirk shook Titmouse's hand with irrepressible enthusiasm, at least a dozen times on their way to the inn; while Gammon now and then squeezed his arm, and spoke, in an earnest tone, of the difficulties yet to be overcome. On reaching the inn, the landlady, who was standing at the door, and had evidently been on the look-out for her suddenly distinguished guest, received him with several profound courtesies, and eager and respectful inquiries about his health, as he had had no luncheon —and asking what he would be pleased to have for his supper. She added, moreover, that fearing his former bedroom might not have been to his mind, she had changed it, and he would that night sleep in the very best she had.

"We must make a night on 't, eh?" quoth Mr. Quirk, with an excited air. His partners assented to it, as did Mr. Titmouse; and cold beef, sausages, fowl, ham, beefsteaks, and mutton-chops, were ordered to be in readiness in half an hour's time. Soon afterwards Mr. Titmouse followed the chambermaid to his new bedroom.

"This is the room we always give to quality folk—when we get them," said she, as she set his candle on the drawers, and looked round the apartment with a little triumph.

"Ah—yes!—'pon my soul—quite right—always do your best for quality!—Lovely gal—eh?" Here he chucked her under the chin, and seemed disposed to imprint a kiss upon her cheek; but, with a "Lord sir—that's not the way quality folks behave!" she modestly withdrew. Titmouse, left alone, first threw himself on the bed; then started off, and walked about; then sat down; then danced about; then took off his coat; then threw himself on the bed again; hummed, whistled, and jumped up again—in a sort of wild ecstasy, or delirium. In short, it was plain that he was not master of himself. In fact, his little mind was agitated by the day's event, like as would be a small green puddle by the road-side, for a while, on a stone being suddenly flung into it by a child. While Messrs. Quirk and Snap were, after their sort, as excited as was even Mr. Titmouse himself, Gammon, retiring to his bedroom, and ordering thither pens, ink, and paper, sat down and wrote the following letter:—

"York, 5th April, 18—.

"My Dear Sir,—The very first leisure moment I have, I devote to informing you, as one of the most intimate friends of our highly respected client, Mr. Titmouse, of the brilliant event which has just occurred. After a most severe and protracted struggle of two days, (the Attorney-General having come down special on the other side,) the jury, many of them the chief gentlemen of the county, have within this last hour returned a verdict in favor of our friend, Mr. Titmouse—thereby declaring him entitled to the whole of the estates at Yatton, (ten thousand a-year rent-roll, at least,) and, by consequence, to an immense accumulation of bygone rents, which must be made up to him by his predecessor, who, with all his powerful party, and in spite of the unscrupulous means resorted to to defeat the ends of justice, is dismayed beyond expression at the result of this grand struggle—unprecedented in the annals of modern litigation. The result has given lively satisfaction in these parts—it is plain that our friend Mr. Titmouse will very soon become a great *lion* in society.

"To you, my dear sir, as an early and valued friend of our interesting client, I sit down to communicate the earliest intelligence of this most important event; and I trust that you will, with our respectful compliments, communicate the happy news to your amiable family—who, I am persuaded, must ever feel a warm interest in our client's welfare. He is now, naturally enough, much excited with his extraordinary good fortune, to which we are only too proud and happy to have contributed by our humble, but strenuous and long-continued exertions. He begs me to express his cordial feelings towards you, and to say that, on his return to town, Satin Lodge will be one of the very first places at which he will call. In the mean time, I beg you will believe me, my dear sir, with the best compliments of myself and partners, yours most sincerely,
"Oily Gammon.

"Thomas Tag-Rag, Esq.
&c. &c. &c."

"That, I think, will about do"—quoth Gammon to himself, with a thoughtful air, as, having made an exact copy of the above letter, he sealed it up and directed it. He then came down-stairs to supper, having first sent the letter off to the post-office. What a merry meal was that same supper! Mr. Titmouse, Mr. Quirk, and Mr. Snap, ate almost to bursting; Gammon was more abstinent—but, overpowered by the importunities of his companions, he took a far greater quantity than usual of the bouncing bottled porter, the hard port, and fiery sherry, which his companions drank as if they had been but water. Then came in the spirits—with hot water and cold; and to these all present did ample

justice; in fact, it was very hard for any one to resist the other's entreaties. Mr. Gammon in due time felt himself *going*—but seemed as if, on such an occasion, he had no help for it. Every one of the partners, at different stages of the evening, made—*more suo*—a speech to Titmouse, and proposed his health; who, of course, replied to each, and drank the health of each. Presently old Quirk sang a comic song, in a very dismal key; and then he and Snap joined in a duet called, "*Handcuff* v. *Halter*;" at which Gammon laughed heartily, and listened with that degree of pleased attention, which showed that he had resolved, for once at least, to abandon himself to the low enjoyment of the passing hour. Then Titmouse began to speak of what he should do, as soon as he had "touched the shiners"—his companions entering into all his little schemes with a sort of affectionate enthusiasm. At length old Mr. Quirk, after by turns laughing, crying, singing, and talking, leaned back in his chair, with his half-emptied tumbler of brandy and water in his hand, and fell fast asleep. Gammon also, in spite of all he could do, began—the deuce take it!—to feel and exhibit the effects of a hasty and hearty meal, and his very unusual potations, especially after such long abstinence and intense anxiety as he had experienced during the previous two days. He had intended to have seen all his companions under the table; but he began gradually to feel a want of control over himself, his thoughts, and feelings, which a little disquieted him, as he now and then caught glimpses of the extent to which it was proceeding. "*In vino veritas*," properly translated, means—that when a man is fairly under the influence of liquor, you see a strong manifestation of his real character. The vain man is vainer; the voluble, more voluble; the morose, more morose; the passionate, more passionate; the detractor, more detracting; the sycophant, more sycophantic, and so forth. Now Mr. Gammon was a cold, cautious, long-headed schemer, and as the fumes of liquor mounted up into his head, they did but increase the action and intensity of those qualities for which, when sober, he was so pre-eminently distinguished; only that there was a half-conscious want of coherency and subordination. The impulse and the habit were present; but there seemed also a strange disturbing force: in short—what is the use of disguising matters?—Mr. Gammon was getting very drunk; and he felt very sorry for it—but it was too late. In due time the dismal effort *not to appear drunk*, ceased—a vast relief! Silent and more silent he became; more and more observant of the motions of Snap and Titmouse; more and more complicated and profound in his schemes and purposes; and at length he felt as if, by some incomprehensible means, he were attempting to take *himself* in—inveigling himself: at which point, after a vain attempt to understand his exact position, with reference to himself, he slowly, but *rather* unsteadily, rose from his chair; looked with an unsettled eye at Titmouse for nearly a minute; a queer smile now and then flitted across his features; and he presently rang the bell. Boots having obeyed the summons, Gammon with a turbid brain and cloudy eye followed him to the door, with a most desperate but unavailing effort to walk thither steadily. Having reached his room, he sat down with a sort of suspicion that he had said or done something to commit himself. Vain was the attempt to wind up his watch; and at length he gave it up, with a faint curse. With only one stocking off, conceiving himself to be undressed, after trying four or five times ineffectually to blow out his candle, he succeeded, and got into bed; his head, however, occupying the place assigned to his feet. He lay asleep for about half an hour—and then experienced certain insupportable sensations. He was indeed miserable beyond description; and lost all thoughts of what would become of Titmouse—of Quirk and Snap—in his own most desperate indisposition.

"I say, Snap," quoth Titmouse, with a grin, and putting his finger to his nose, as soon as Gammon had quitted the room in the manner above described—"Mr. Quirk a'n't much company for us just now, eh? Shall we go out and have some fun?"

"Walk will do us good—yes. Go where you like, Titmouse," replied Snap, who, though young, was a thoroughly seasoned vessel, and could hold a great deal of drink without seeming, or really being, much the worse for it. As for Titmouse, happily for him! (seeing that he was so soon to have the command of unlimited means, unless indeed the envious fates should in the mean time interpose to dash the brimful cup from his eager lips,) he was becoming more and more accustomed to the

effects of drink; which had, up to the moment I am speaking of, had no other effect than to elevate his spirits up to the pitch of indefinite daring and enterprise. "'Pon my life, Snap, couldn't we stand another tumbler—eh? Warm us for the night air?" "What shall it be?" quoth Snap, ringing the bell —"whiskey?"

"Devil knows, and devil cares!" replied Mr. Titmouse, recklessly; and presently there stood before the friends two steaming tumblers of what they had ordered. Immediately after disposing of them, the two gentlemen, quite *up to the mark*, as they expressed it—each with a cigar in his mouth —sallied forth in quest of adventures. Titmouse felt that he had now become a gentleman; and his tastes and feelings prompted him to pursue, as early as possible, a gentlemanly line of conduct— particularly in his amusements. It was now past twelve; and the narrow old-fashioned streets of York, silent and deserted, formed a strong contrast to the streets of London at the same hour, and seemed scarcely to admit of much sport. But sport our friends were determined to have; and the night air aiding the effect of their miscellaneous potations, they soon became somewhat excited and violent. Yet it seemed difficult to get up a *row*—for no one was visible in any direction. Snap, however, by way of making a beginning, suddenly shouted "Fire!" at the top of his voice, and Titmouse joined him; when having heard half a dozen windows hastily thrown up by the dismayed inhabitants whom the alarming sounds had aroused from sleep, they scampered off at their top speed. In another part of the town they yelled, and whistled, and crowed like cocks, and mewed like cats—the last two being accomplishments in which Titmouse was very eminent—and again took to their heels. Then they contrived to twist a few knockers off doors, pull bells, and break a few windows; and while exercising their skill in this last branch of the night's amusement, Titmouse, in the very act of aiming a stone which took effect in the middle of a bedroom window, was surprised by an old watchman waddling round the corner. He was a feeble asthmatic old man; so Snap knocked him down at once, and Titmouse blew out the candle in his lantern, which he then jumped upon and smashed to pieces, and knocked its prostrate owner's hat over his eyes. Snap, on some strange unaccountable impulse, wrested the rattle out of the poor creature's hand, and sprang it loudly. This brought several other old watchmen from different quarters; and aged numbers prevailing against youthful spirit—the two gentlemen, after a considerable scuffle, were overpowered and conveyed to the cage. Snap having muttered something about demanding to look at the *warrant*, and then about an action for malicious arrest and false imprisonment, sank on a form, and then down upon the floor, and fell fast asleep. Titmouse for a while showed a very resolute front, and swore a great many oaths, that he would fight the Boots at the inn for five shillings, if he dared show himself; but all of a sudden, his spirit collapsed, as it were, and he sank on the floor, and was grievously indisposed for some hours. About nine o'clock, the contents of the cage—viz. Snap, Titmouse, two farmers' boys who had been caught stealing cakes, an old beggar, and a young pickpocket—were conveyed before the Lord Mayor to answer for their several misdeeds. Snap was wofully crestfallen. He had sent for the landlord of the inn where they had put up, to come, on their behalf, to the Mansion-house; but he told Quirk of the message he had received. Mr. Quirk, finding that Gammon could not leave his room through severe indisposition—the very first time that Mr. Quirk had ever seen or heard of his being so overtaken —set off, in a very mortified and angry mood, in quest of his hopeful client and junior partner. They were in a truly dismal pickle. Titmouse pale as death, his clothes disordered, and a part of his shirt-collar torn off; Snap sat beside him with a sheepish air, seeming scarce able to keep his eyes open. At him Mr. Quirk looked with keen indignation, but spoke neither to him, nor on his behalf. For Titmouse, however, he expressed great commiseration, and entreated his Lordship to overlook the little misconduct of which he (Titmouse) in a moment of extreme excitement, had been guilty, on condition of his making amends for the injury, both to person and property, of which he had been guilty. By this time his Lordship had become aware of the names and circumstances of the two delinquents; and after lecturing them very severely, he fined them five shillings a-piece for being drunk, and permitted them to be discharged, on their promising never to offend in the like way

again, and paying three pounds by way of compensation to the watchman, and one or two persons whose knockers they were proved to have wrenched off, and windows to have broken. His Lordship had delayed the case of Messrs. Snap and Titmouse to the last; chiefly because, as soon as he had found out who Mr. Titmouse was, it occurred to him that he would make a sort of a little star, at the great ball to be given by the Lady Mayoress that evening. As soon, therefore, as the charge had been disposed of, his Lordship desired Mr. Titmouse to follow him, for a moment, to his private room. There having shut the door, he gently chided Mr. Titmouse for the indiscretion of which he had been guilty, and which was not to have been expected from a gentleman of his consequence in the county. His Lordship begged him to consider the station which he was now called to occupy; and in alluding to the signal event of the preceding day, warmly congratulated him upon it; and, trusted by the way, that Mr. Titmouse would, in the evening, favor the Lady Mayoress and himself with his company at the ball, where they would be very proud of the opportunity of introducing him to some of the gentry of the county, among whom his future lot in life was likely to be cast. Mr. Titmouse listened to all this as if he were in a dream. His brain (the little of it that he had) was yet in a most unsettled state; as also was his stomach. When he heard the words "Lady Mayoress," "ball," "Mansion-house," "gentry of the county," and so forth, a dim vision of splendor flashed before his eyes; and, with a desperate effort, he assured the Lord Mayor that he should be "very uncommon proud to accept the invitation, if he were well enough—but, just then, he was uncommon ill."

His Lordship pressed him to take a glass of water, to revive him and settle his stomach; but Mr. Titmouse declined it, and soon afterwards quitted the room; and leaning on the arm of Mr. Quirk, set off homeward—Snap walking beside him in silence, with a very quaint disconcerted air—not being taken the least notice of by Mr. Quirk. As they passed along, they encountered several of the barristers on their way to court, and others, who recognized Titmouse; and with a smile, evidently formed a pretty accurate guess as to the manner in which the triumph of the preceding day had been celebrated. Mr. Quirk, finding that Mr. Gammon was far too much indisposed to think of quitting York, at all events till a late hour in the evening, and, indeed, that Titmouse was similarly situated—with a very bad grace consented to their stopping behind; and himself, with Snap—the former inside, the latter outside—having paid most of the witnesses, leaving the remainder, together with their own expenses at the inn, to be settled by Mr. Gammon—set off for town by the two o'clock coach. It was, indeed, high time for them to return; for the oppressed inmates of Newgate were getting wild on account of the protracted absence of their kind and confidential advisers. When they left, both Gammon and Titmouse were in bed. The former, however, began to revive, shortly after the wheels of the coach which conveyed away his respected copartners, and the sound of the guard's horn, had ceased to be heard; and about an hour afterwards he descended from his room, a great deal the better for the duties of the toilet, and a bottle of soda-water with a little brandy in it. A cup of strong tea, and a slice or two of dry toast, set him entirely to rights—and then Gammon—the calm, serene, astute Gammon—was "himself again." Had he said anything indiscreet, or in any way committed himself, over-night?—thought he, as he sat alone, with folded arms, trying to recollect what had taken place. He hoped not—but had no means of ascertaining. Then he entered upon a long and anxious consideration of the position of affairs, since the great event of the preceding evening. The only definite object which he had ever had in view, personally, in entering into the affair, was the obtaining that ascendency over Titmouse, in the event of his becoming possessed of the magnificent fortune they were in quest of for him, which might enable him, in one way or another, to elevate his own position in society, and secure for himself permanent and solid advantages. In the progress of the affair, however, new views presented themselves to his mind.

Towards the close of the afternoon Titmouse recovered sufficiently to make his appearance down-stairs. Soon afterwards, Gammon proposed a walk, as the day was fine, and the brisk fresh country air would be efficacious in restoring Titmouse to his wonted health and spirits. His suggestion was adopted; and soon afterwards might have been seen, Gammon, supporting on his arm his languid

and interesting client Mr. Titmouse, making their way towards the river; along whose quiet and pleasing banks they walked for nearly a couple of hours in close conversation; during which, Gammon, by repeated and various efforts, succeeded in producing an impression on Titmouse's mind, that the good fortune which seemed now within his reach, had been secured for him by the enterprise, skill, and caution of him, Mr. Gammon, only; who would, moreover, continue to devote himself to Mr. Titmouse's interests, and protect him from the designs of those who would endeavor to take advantage of him. Mr. Gammon also dropped one or two vague hints that his—Titmouse's—continuance in the enjoyment of the Yatton property, would always depend upon the will and power of him, the aforesaid Mr. Gammon; in whose hands were most unsuspected, but potent weapons. And indeed it is not at all impossible that such may prove to be really the case.

What a difference is there between man and man, in temper, and disposition, and intellect! Compare together the two individuals now walking slowly, arm-in-arm, beside the sweet Ouse; and supposing one to have designs upon the other—disposed to ensnare and overreach him—what chance has the shorter gentleman? Compare even their countenances—ah me!—what a difference!

Gammon heard with uneasiness of Titmouse's intention to go to the Lady Mayoress's ball that evening; and, for many reasons, resolved that he should not. In vain, however, did Gammon try to persuade him that he was asked only to be turned into ridicule, for that almost everybody there would be in the interest of the Aubreys, and bitterly opposed to him, Mr. Titmouse; in spite of these and all other representations, Titmouse expressed his determination to go to the ball; on which Gammon, with a good-natured smile, exclaimed, "Well, well!"—and withdrew his opposition. Shortly after their return from their walk, they sat down to dinner; and Gammon, with a cheerful air, ordered a bottle of champagne, of which he drank about a glass and a half, and Titmouse the remainder. That put him into a humor to take more wine, without much pressing; and he swallowed, in rapid succession, a glass of ale, and seven or eight glasses of red-hot port and fiery sherry. By this time, he had forgotten all about the ball, and clamored for brandy and water. Gammon, however, saw that his end was answered. Poor Titmouse was soon reduced to a state of helplessness and insensibility; and within half an hour's time was assisted to his bedroom in a truly deplorable condition! Thus Gammon had the satisfaction of seeing his benevolent design accomplished, although it pained him to think of the temporary inconvenience occasioned to the unconscious sufferer; who had, however, escaped the devices of those who wished publicly to expose his inexperience; and as for the means which Gammon had resorted to in order to effect his purpose,—why, he may be supposed to have had a remoter object in view, viz. early to disgust him with intemperance.

Alas! how disappointed were the mayor and mayoress, that their queer little lion did not make his appearance in the gay and brilliant scene! How many had they told that he was coming! Their three daughters were almost bursting with vexation and astonishment. They had been disposed to entertain a warmer feeling than that of mere curiosity towards the new owner of an estate worth ten thousand a-year—had drawn lots which of them was first to dance with him; and had told all their friends on which of them the lot had fallen. Then, again, many of the county people inquired from time to time of the chagrined little mayor and mayoress when "Mr. Ticklemouse," "Mr. Tipmouse," "Mr. Tipplebattle," or "whatever his name might be," was coming; full of real curiosity, much tinctured, however, with disgust and contempt, to see the stranger, who had suddenly acquired so commanding a station in the county—so strong a claim to their sympathy and respect! Then, again, there was a very great lion there, exhibiting for a short time only, who also had wished to see the *little* lion, and expressed keen regrets that it was not there according to appointment. The great lion was Mr. Quicksilver, who had stepped in for about half an hour, merely to show himself; and when he heard of the expected arrival of his little client, it occurred to Mr. Quicksilver, who could see several inches beyond by no means a short nose, that Mr. Titmouse had gained a verdict which would very soon make him *patron of the borough of Yatton*—that he probably would not think of sitting for the borough himself, and that a little public civility bestowed upon Mr. Titmouse, by the great Mr. Quicksilver,

one of the counsel to whose splendid exertions he was indebted for his all, might be, as it were, *bread thrown upon the waters, to be found after many days*. It was true that Mr. Quicksilver, in a bitter stream of eloquent invective, had repeatedly denounced the system of close and "rotten" boroughs; but his heart, all the while, secretly rebelled; and he knew that a snug little borough was a thing on every account not to be sneezed at. He sat for one himself, though he had also contested several counties; but that was expensive and harassing work; and the seat which he at present occupied, he had paid far too high a price for. He had no objection to the existence of close boroughs in the abstract; but only to so many of them being in the hands of the opposite party; and the legislature hath since recognized the distinction, and acted upon it. Here, however, was the case of a borough which was going to change hands, and pass from Tory to Whig; and could Mr. Quicksilver fail to watch it with interest? Was he, therefore, to neglect this opportunity of slipping in for Yatton—and the *straw moving*, too, in town—a general election looked for? So Mr. Quicksilver really regretted the absence of the little lion—his little friend and client, Mr. Titmouse.

Thus, and by such persons, and on such grounds, was lamented the absence of Mr. Titmouse from the ball of the Lady Mayoress of York; none, however, knowing the cause which kept him from so select and distinguished an assembly. Mr. Gammon, as soon as he had seen Mr. Titmouse properly attended to, and had expressed an anxious sympathy for him, set out for a walk—a quiet solitary walk round the ancient walls of York. If on a fine night you look up into the sky, and see it gleaming with innumerable stars, and then fix your eye intently, *without wavering*, upon some one star; however vivid and brilliant may be those in its immediate vicinity, they will disappear utterly, and that on which your eye is fixed will seem alone in its glory—sole star in the firmament. Something of this kind happened to Mr. Gammon when on the walls of York—now slowly, then rapidly walking, now standing, then sitting; all the objects which generally occupied his thoughts faded away, before one on which his mind's eye was then fixed with unwavering intensity—the image of Miss Aubrey. The golden fruit that was on the eve of dropping into the hands of the firm—ten thousand pounds—the indefinite and varied advantages to himself, personally, to which their recent successes might be turned, all vanished. What would he not undergo, what would he not sacrifice, to secure the favor of Miss Aubrey? Beautiful being—all innocence, elegance, refinement:—to possess her would elevate him in the scale of being; it would purify his feelings, it would ennoble his nature. What was too arduous or desperate to be undertaken in order to secure a prize so glorious as this? He fell into a long revery, till, roused by a chill gust of night air, he rose from his seat upon one of the niches in the walls;—how lonely, how solitary he felt! He walked on rapidly, at a pace that suited the heated and rapid current of thoughts that passed through his mind.

"No, I have not a chance—not a chance!" at length he thought to himself—"That girl will be prouder in her poverty, than ever she would have been in her wealth and splendor. Who am I?—a partner in the firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; a firm in bad odor with the profession; looking for practice from polluted sources, with a host of miscreants for clients—faugh! faugh! I feel contaminated and degraded! My name even is against me; it is growing into a by-word!—We must push our advantage—they must be driven from Yatton—he, she—all of them; yes, all." He paused for a long time, and a sort of pang passed through his mind. "They are to make way for—Titmouse! —for Titmouse!! And he, too, loves her—*bah!*" He involuntarily uttered this sound fiercely, and aloud. "But stay—he really is in love with Miss Aubrey—that I know;—ah! I can turn it to good purpose; it will give me, by the way, a hold upon the little fool; I will make him believe that through my means he may obtain Miss Aubrey! Misery may make her accessible; I can easily bring myself into contact with them, in their distress; for there are the mesne profits—*the mesne profits!* Heavens! how glorious, but how dreadful an engine are *they*! They will help to batter down the high wall of pride that surrounds *them* and *her*; but it will require infinite care and tact in the use of such an engine! I will be all delicacy—gentleness—generosity; I will appear friendly to her, and to her brother; and, if needs must be, why he must be *crushed*. There is no help for it. He looks decidedly, by the way

—a man of intellect. I wonder how he bears it—how they all bear it—how *she* bears it! *Beggared beauty*—there's something touching in the very sound! How little they think of the power that is at this moment in my hands!" Here a long interval elapsed, during which his thoughts had wandered towards more practical matters. "If they don't get a rule *nisi*, next term, we shall be in a position to ask them what course they intend to pursue: Gad, they may, if so disposed, hold out for—how very cold it is!"—he buttoned his coat—"and, what have I been thinking of? Really I have been dreaming; or am I as great a fool as Tittlebat?" Within a few minutes' time he had quitted the walls, and descended through one of the turreted gateways, into the town.

CHAPTER II

When, about seven o'clock on the morning after the delivery of the verdict, which, if sustained, consigned the Aubreys to beggary, they met to partake of a slight and hasty breakfast before setting off for Yatton, the countenances of each bore the traces of great suffering, and also of the efforts made to conceal it. They saluted each other with fervent affection, each attempting a smile—but a smile, how wan and forced! "The moment has arrived, dear Agnes and Kate," said Mr. Aubrey, with a fond air but a firm voice, as his sister was preparing tea, in silence, fearful of looking at either her brother or sister-in-law; "the moment has arrived that is to try what stuff we are made of. If we have any strength, this is the time to show it!"

"I'm sure I thought of you both almost all night long!" replied Miss Aubrey, tremulously. "You have a lion's heart, dear Charles; and yet you are so gentle with us"–

"I should be a poor creature indeed, Kate, to give way just when I ought to play the man. Come, dear Kate, I will remind you of a noble passage from our glorious Shakespeare. It braces one's nerves to hear it!" Then, with a fine impressive delivery, and kindling with excitement as he went on, Aubrey began—

"In the reproof of chance
Lies the true proof of men. The sea being smooth
How many shallow bauble boats dare sail
Upon her patient breast, making their way
With those of nobler bulk?
But let the ruffian Boreas once enrage
The gentle Thetis, and, anon, behold
The strong-ribb'd bark through liquid mountains cut,
Bounding between the two moist elements
Like Perseus' horse; where's then the saucy boat,
Whose weak untimber'd sides but even now
Co-rivall'd greatness? Either to harbor fled,
Or made a toast for Neptune!—Even so,
Doth valor's show, and valor's worth divide,
In storms of fortune."[3]

'Twas kindly meant of Aubrey; he thought to divert the excited feelings of his wife and sister, and occupy their imagination with the vivid imagery and noble sentiment of the poet. While he repeated the above lines, his sister's eye had been fixed upon him with a radiant expression of resolution, her heart responding to what she heard. She could not, however, speak when he had ceased. For herself she cared not; but when she looked at her brother, and thought of him, his wife, his children, her fortitude yielded before the moving array, and she burst into tears.

"Come, Kate—my own sweet, good Kate!" said he, cheerfully, laying his hand upon hers, "we must keep constant guard against our *feelings*. They will be ever arraying before our eyes the past—the dear, delightful past—happy and beautiful, in mournful contrast with the present, and stirring up, every moment, a thousand secret and tender associations, calculated to shake our constancy. Whenever our eyes *do* turn to the past, let it be with humble gratitude to God for having allowed us all, in this changing world, so long an interval of happiness; such, indeed, as falls to the lot of few. *What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*"

[3] Note 3. Page 32.

"My own Charles!" exclaimed Mrs. Aubrey, rising and throwing her arms round her husband, whose countenance was calm and serene, as was the tone of the sentiments he expressed solemn and elevated. Miss Aubrey was overcome with her stronger feelings, and buried her face in her handkerchief. Shortly afterwards the carriage drew up, and Dr. Tatham also made his appearance on horseback.

"Good-morning! good-morning, my friends," cried he, cheerfully, as he entered, holding forth both his hands; "you can't think how fresh and pleasant the air is! The country for me, at all times of the year! I hate towns! Did you sleep well? I slept like a top all night long;—no, I didn't either, by the way. Come, come, ladies! On with your bonnets and shawls!" Thus rattled on worthy little Dr. Tatham, in order to prevent anything being said which might disturb those whom he came to see, or cause his own highly-charged feelings to give way. The sight of Mrs. and Miss Aubrey, however, who greeted him in silence as they hastily drew on their bonnets and shawls, overcame his ill-sustained gayety; and before he could bustle back, as he presently did, to the street door, his eyes were obstructed with tears, and he wrung the hand of Mr. Aubrey, who stood beside him, with convulsive energy. They soon set off, and at a rapid pace, Dr. Tatham riding along beside the carriage. Yatton was about twelve miles off. For the first few miles they preserved a tolerable show of cheerfulness; but as they perceived themselves nearing Yatton, it became plainly more and more of an effort for any of them to speak. Dr. Tatham, also, talked to them seldomer through the windows. At one time he dropped considerably behind; at another, he rode as much ahead.

"Oh, Charles, don't you dread to see Yatton?" said Miss Aubrey, suddenly, as they turned a familiar corner of the road. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Aubrey answered her.

"When you come to the village," said Mr. Aubrey presently, to the postilion, "drive through it, right up to the Hall, as quickly as you can." He was obeyed. As they passed rapidly along with their windows up, none of the wretched party seemed disposed to look through, but leaned back, in silence, in their seats.

"God bless you! God bless you! I shall call in the evening," exclaimed Dr. Tatham; as, having reached the vicarage, he hastily waved his hand, and turned off. Soon they had passed the park gates; when had they entered it before with such heavy hearts—with eyes so dreading to encounter every familiar object that met them? Alas! the spacious park was no longer theirs; not a tree, not a shrub, not a flower, not an inch of ground; the trees all putting forth their fresh green leaves—nothing was theirs; the fine old turreted gateway, too—an object always, hitherto, of peculiar pride and attachment, their hearts seemed to tremble as they rattled under it!

"Courage, my sweet loves! Courage! courage!" exclaimed Mr. Aubrey, grasping each of their hands, and then they burst into tears. Mr. Aubrey felt his own fortitude grievously shaken as he entered the old Hall, no longer his *home*, and reflected, moreover—bitterest thought of all—that he had been declared by the law to have been hitherto the wrongful occupant of it; that he must forthwith proceed to "set his house in order," and prepare for a dreadful reckoning with him whom the law had declared to be the true owner of Yatton.

The formal result of the trial at York, was, as has been already intimated, to declare Mr. Titmouse entitled to recover possession of only that insignificant portion of the estates which were occupied by Jacob Jolter; and that, too, only in the event of the first four days of the ensuing term elapsing, without any successful attempt being made to impeach, before the court, the propriety of the verdict of the jury. It is a principle of our English law, that the verdict of a jury is, in general, irreversible and conclusive; but, inasmuch as that verdict may have been improperly obtained—as, for instance, either through the misdirection of the judge, or his erroneous admission or rejection of evidence; or may have no force in point of law by reason of the pleadings of the party for whom it has been given, being insufficient to warrant the court to award its final judgment upon, and in conformity with, such verdict, or by reason of the discovery of fresh evidence subsequently to the trial: therefore the law hath given the party who failed at the trial, till the end of the first four days

of the term next ensuing, to show the court why the verdict obtained by his opponent ought to go for nothing, and matters remain as they were before the trial, or a new trial be had. So anxious is our law to afford the utmost scope and opportunity for ascertaining what ought to be its decision, which, when obtained, is, as hath been said, solemnly and permanently conclusive upon the subject; such the effectual and practical corrective of any error or miscarriage in the working of that noble engine—trial by jury. Thus, then, it appears, that the hands of Mr. Titmouse and his advisers were at all events stayed till the first four days of Easter term should have elapsed. During the interval thus afforded to the advisers of Mr. Aubrey, his case, as it appeared upon the notes of his counsel on their briefs, with the indirect assistance and corroboration derived from the short-hand writers' notes, underwent repeated and most anxious examination in all its parts and bearings, by all his legal advisers. It need hardly be said, that every point in the case favorable to their client had been distinctly and fully raised by the Attorney-General, assisted by his very able juniors, Mr. Sterling and Mr. Crystal; and so was it with the counsel of Mr. Titmouse, as, indeed, the result showed. On subsequent examination, none of them could discover any false step, or any advantage which had been overlooked, or taken inefficiently. Independently of various astute objections taken by the Attorney-General to the reception of several important portions of the plaintiff's evidence, the leading points relied on in favor of Mr. Aubrey were—the impropriety of Lord Widdrington's rejection of the deed of confirmation on account of the erasure in it; the effect of that deed, assuming the erasure not to have warranted its rejection; and several questions arising out of the doctrine of adverse possession, by which alone, it had been contended at the trial, that the claim of the descendants of Stephen Dreddlington had been peremptorily and finally barred. Two very long consultations had been held at the Attorney-General's chambers, attended by Mr. Sterling, Mr. Crystal, Mr. Mansfield, the three partners in the firm of Runnington and Company, Mr. Parkinson, and Mr. Aubrey—who had come up to town specially for the purpose. Greatly to the surprise of all of them, he stated most distinctly and emphatically, that he insisted on no ground of objection being taken against his opponent, except such as was strictly just, equitable, honorable, and conscientious. Rather than defeat him on mere technicalities—rather than avail himself of mere positive rules of law, while the RIGHT, as between the consciences of man and man, was substantially in favor of his opponent—Mr. Aubrey declared, however absurd or Quixotic he might be thought, that he would—if he had them—lose fifty Yattons. *Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum.* "You mean to say, Aubrey," interrupted the Attorney-General, mildly, after listening for some time to his friend and client with evident interest, and admiration of his pure and high-minded character—"that it would be unconscientious of you to avail yourself of a fixed and beneficial rule of law, established upon considerations of general equity and utility—such, for instance, as that of adverse possession in order to retain possession, while"–

"Pray, Mr. Attorney-General, if I had lent you five hundred pounds seven or eight years ago, would you set up the *statute of limitations* against me when I asked for re-payment?"

"Excuse me, Aubrey," replied the Attorney-General, with a faint flush upon his handsome and dignified features; "but how idle all this is! One would imagine that we were sitting in a school of casuistry! What are we met for, in the name of common sense? For what, but to prevent the rightful owner of property from being deprived of it by a trumpery accidental erasure in one of his title-deeds, which time has deprived him of the means of accounting for?" He then, in a very kind way, but with a dash of peremptoriness, requested that the case might be left in their hands, and that they might be given credit for resorting to nothing that was inconsistent with the nicest and most fastidious sense of honor. This observation put an end to so unprecedented an interference; but if Mr. Aubrey supposed that it had had any effect upon the Attorney-General, he was mistaken; for of course that learned and eminent person secretly resolved to avail himself of every means that he could think of, for overturning the verdict, and securing the Aubreys in the possession of Yatton. He at the same time earnestly endeavored to moderate the expectations of his client, declaring that he was by no means sanguine as to the issue; that Lord Widdrington's rulings at *Nisi Prius* were very formidable things—

in fact, rarely assailable; and then, again, the senior puisne judge of the court—Mr. Justice Grayley—had been consulted by Lord Widdrington at the trial, and concurred with him in his principal ruling, now sought to be moved against. At the close of the second consultation, on the night of the first day in Easter term, (the Attorney-General intending to move on the ensuing morning,) after having finally gone over the case in all its bearings, and agreed upon the exact grounds of moving—the Attorney-General called back Mr. Runnington for a moment, as he was walking away with Mr. Aubrey, and whispered to him, that it would be very proper to assume at once that the motion failed; and consider the best mode of negotiating concerning the surrender of the bulk of the property, and the payment of the mesne profits.

"Oh! Mr. Aubrey has quite made up his mind to the worst, Mr. Attorney-General."

"Ah, well!" replied the Attorney-General, with a sigh; and about five minutes after Mr. Runnington's departure, the Attorney-General stepped into his carriage, which had been standing for the last hour opposite his chambers. He drove down to the House of Commons, where he almost immediately after delivered a long and luminous speech on one of the most important and intricate questions that had been discussed during the session!

At length arrived the morning of the second day in term. Lord Widdrington was occupied for about a couple of hours in "going through the bar"—*i. e.* calling on counsel to "move" in their order matters of general business, before taking motions for new trials. About a quarter of an hour before his Lordship had completed the round of the bar, the Attorney-General came into court, and arranged all his books and papers before him; Mr. Subtle sitting next to him, intending to take a note of the grounds on which he moved.

"Does any other gentleman move?" inquired Lord Widdrington, looking over the court. He received no answer.

"Mr. Attorney-General," said he; and the Attorney-General rose–

"If your Lordship pleases," he commenced, slowly rising and bowing—"in a case of Doe on the Demise of Titmouse against Jolter, tried before your Lordship at the last assizes for the county of York, I have humbly to move your Lordship for *a rule to show cause why a nonsuit should not be entered, or why the verdict entered for the plaintiff should not be set aside, and a New Trial had*." He proceeded to state the facts of the case with great clearness and brevity. In like manner—with perfect simplicity and precision—he stated the various points arising upon the evidence, and the general grounds of law which have been already specified; but I am so grateful to the reader for his patience under the infliction of so much legal detail as was contained in the last chapter of this history, that I shall now content myself with the above general statement of what took place before the court. As soon as he had sat down, the judges consulted together for a minute or two; and then—

"You may take a rule to show cause, Mr. Attorney-General," said Lord Widdrington.

"On all the grounds I have mentioned, my Lord?"

"Yes—on all of them. They are very well worth considering—Mr. Solicitor-General, do you move?"

Up rose, thereupon, the Solicitor-General.

"I shall discharge your rule," whispered Mr. Subtle to the Attorney-General.

"I'm not excessively sanguine,"—whispered the Attorney-General, leaning his head close to Mr. Subtle, and with his hand before his mouth. Then his clerk removed the battery of books which stood before him, together with his brief; and taking another out of his turgid red bag, the Attorney-General was soon deep in the details of an important shipping case, in which he was going to move when next it came to his turn.

Thus the court had granted a "RULE NISI," as it is called, (*i. e.* it commanded a particular thing to be done—"*unless*" sufficient "*cause*" could be thereafter shown to the court why it should not be done,) for either entering a nonsuit, or having a new trial. Now, had this rule been obtained in the present day, nearly two years must have elapsed, owing to the immense and perhaps unavoidable

arrear of business, before the other side could have been heard in answer to it. Now, had such been the state of business at the time when the Rule in *Doe* d. *Titmouse* v. *Jolter* was moved for, see the practical effect of it: had Mr. Aubrey, instead of the high-minded and conscientious man he undoubtedly was, been a rogue, he might have had the opportunity of getting in nearly twenty thousand pounds, and setting off with it to spend upon the Continent, as soon as he found that the court had decided against him: or, if the tenants should have been served with notice not to pay their rents to any one but Mr. Titmouse—at all events not to Mr. Aubrey—how were Mr. Aubrey and his family to have subsisted during this interval?—and with the possibility that, at the end of some two years, he might be declared to be the true owner of Yatton, and consequently all the while entitled to those rents, &c., the non-payment of which might have entailed upon him the most serious embarrassments! During the same interval, poor Mr. Titmouse, heart-sick with hope deferred, might have taken to liquor, as a solace under his misery, and drunk himself to death before the rule was discharged—or brought his valuable life to a more sudden and abrupt conclusion: which affecting event would have relieved the court from deciding several troublesome points of law, and kept the Aubreys in possession of the Yatton estates. Thus much for some of the incidental effects of the law's delay! At the time, however, concerning which I am writing, it was otherwise.[4] Shall I be believed when I inform the reader that within ten or twelve days after the rule *nisi*, in the present case, had been moved, "cause was shown" against it, by Mr. Subtle and Mr. Lynx, and very admirably shown against it too. (Mr. Quicksilver, fortunately for the interests of Mr. Titmouse, was absent, attending a great meeting in the City, called by himself to establish a society for the Moral and Intellectual Regeneration of Mankind on the basis of Pure Reason.) The Attorney-General exerted himself to the utmost in support of his rule. He felt that the court—though scarcely at all interfering during his address—was against him; yet he delivered, perhaps, one of the most masterly arguments that had ever been heard in the place where he was speaking. Mr. Sterling and Mr. Crystal, wisely avoiding the ground so admirably occupied by the Attorney-General, contented themselves with strengthening those positions which appeared to them less fortified by authorities than the others; and then the court said they would take a day or two's time to consider; "less on account," said Lord Widdrington, "of the difficulty of the case, than the magnitude of the interests which would probably be affected by their decision."

"You have them dead with you, Subtle," whispered the Attorney-General, a slight expression of chagrin stealing over his features, as he heard the observation of Lord Widdrington.

"I never doubted it," replied Mr. Subtle, with a confident air. Every day afterwards, from the sitting to the rising of the court, did the anxious Aubrey attend in the King's Bench, to hear the judgment of the court delivered. At length arrived the last day of the term. Soon after the sitting of the court, Lord Widdrington pronounced judgment in two or three cases; but not seeing the Attorney-General (who was engaged before the House of Lords) in his place, delayed giving judgment in the case of "*Doe* v. *Jolter*." About two o'clock he made his appearance; and shortly afterwards, Lord Widdrington, after disposing of the matter then before the court, said—"There was a case of Doe on the demise of Titmouse against Jolter, in which, early in the term, a rule was obtained by the Attorney-General, calling upon the lessor of the plaintiff to show cause why"—and he proceeded to state the rule, and then to deliver the written unanimous judgment of the court. A clear statement of the facts out of which the questions submitted to the court had arisen, and of those questions themselves, was listened to by Mr. Aubrey in breathless suspense, before he could obtain the faintest intimation of the judgment which the court was about to pronounce. Lord Widdrington went on to dispose, one by one, with painful deliberation and precision, of the several points presented for the decision of the court. One or two were decided in favor of the defendant; but his Lordship added, that it had become unnecessary to do so, in consequence of the answers given by the witnesses to subsequent questions at the trial, and which disposed of the doubts arising on the former ones. The documentary

[4] Note 4. Page 40.

evidence, subsequently put in, got rid of another difficulty in the early part of the plaintiff's case, and rendered immaterial a question put by the plaintiff's counsel, and strenuously objected to on the part of the defendant, and which the court was of opinion, as had been Lord Widdrington at the trial, ought not to have been allowed. Then, as to the Adverse Possession, on which very great stress had been laid by the defendant's counsel, the court was of opinion that none existed; since there had been a *disability*—indeed, a series of disabilities,[5]—through infancy, coverture, and absence beyond seas, of the various parties through whom the lessor of the plaintiff claimed. Finally, as to the question concerning the ERASURE, the court was of opinion, that the deed in which it occurred had been properly rejected; inasmuch as the erasure was in a clearly material part of the deed, and there were no recitals in the deed by which it could be helped. That it was incumbent upon those proffering the deed in evidence, to account for its altered appearance, although the deed was more than thirty years old, and rebut the presumption of fraud arising therefrom. That the erasure was a clear badge of fraud; and to hold otherwise, would be to open a wide door to frauds of the most extensive and serious description. That there had been no evidence offered to show that the deed had ever been a valid deed; the very first step failed; and, in short, in its then state, it was in contemplation of law *no deed at all*; and, consequently, had been properly rejected. "For all these reasons, therefore," concluded Lord Widdrington, "we are clearly of opinion, that the verdict ought not to be disturbed, and the rule will consequently be DISCHARGED."[6] As these last words were pronounced, a mist seemed for a moment to intervene between Mr. Aubrey and everything around him; for his thoughts had reverted to Yatton, and the precious objects of his affection who were there, in sickening suspense, awaiting the event which had that moment taken place. The words yet sounding in his excited ears, seemed like the sentence of expulsion from Paradise passed upon our dismayed and heart-broken first parents. Yes, in that solemn region of matter-of-fact and common-place—that *dead sea*—generally speaking—as far as feeling, sentiment, incident, or excitement is concerned, the Court of King's Bench—there sat a man of exquisite sensibility—pure and high-minded—whose feelings were for a while paralyzed by the words which had fallen from the judgment-seat, uttered with a cold, business-like, indifferent air—oh! how horridly out of concert with the anxious and excited tone of him whom, with his lovely family, they consigned, in fact, to destitution! After remaining for about a quarter of an hour, during which brief interval he resumed the control over his feelings which he had so long and successfully struggled to maintain, he rose, and quitted the court. It was a heavy lowering afternoon—one which seemed to harmonize with the gloomy and desolate mood in which he slowly walked homeward. He encountered many of his friends, on foot, on horseback, and in carriages, on their way down to the Houses of Parliament; the very sight of them, in the morbid state of his feelings, gave him a pang that was indescribable. With *them* matters were the same as they had ever been—as they had till then been with him—and as probably they would be with them to the end of their career; but *he* had been forced, suddenly and forever, to quit the scene of high excitement and proud aspirations!—He heaved many deep sighs, as he exchanged nod after nod with those he met, as he approached Charing Cross. There he encountered Lord C–, the brilliant Foreign Secretary, arm-in-arm with two eloquent and leading members of the Government—all of them evidently in high spirits, on their way down to the House.

"Ah!—Aubrey!—In town?—An age since we met!"—exclaimed they, in a breath, shaking him cordially by the hand.—"You know, of course, that the budget comes on to-night—eh?"–

"I was not aware of it,"—said Mr. Aubrey.

"I assure you," interrupted Lord C–, "our friends will do us great service—very essential service, by being early in their attendance!—You know that Mr. Quicksilver intends to come out against us to-night in great force?—My dear Aubrey, you are going the wrong way!"

---

[5] Note 5. Page 42.

[6] Note 6. Page 43.

"I am not going down to the House to-night!"

"Not going down?—Eh?—My dear Aubrey, you astonish me!—Have you paired off? You can't think how I lament your absence!"

"I am returning to Yorkshire almost immediately."

"But surely you can come for an hour, or so, to-night—eh? Come! The division won't come on till late. Don't let a trifle stand in the way!"

"I would *not* let a trifle stand in the way," replied Mr. Aubrey, in a tone and manner which at once arrested the attention of those whom he was addressing, and suddenly reminded them of what, in their political eagerness, they had for a moment lost sight of—namely, the perilous position of his private affairs.

"My dear Aubrey, I beg a thousand pardons for intruding such matters upon you," said Lord C–, with sudden earnestness; "but shall we have an opportunity of meeting before you leave town?"

"I fear—*not*;—I set off by the mail to-morrow evening—and have in the mean time much to attend to," said Mr. Aubrey, unable to repress a sigh—and they parted. But for a determination not to yield to a morbid sensibility, he would have got into a hackney-coach, and so have avoided the "troops of friends," the hosts of "old familiar faces," all wending down to the scene in which he had begun so eminently to distinguish himself—but from which he seemed now to be forever excluded. He, therefore, pursued his way on foot. One of those on whom his troubled eye lit, was a well-known figure on horseback—the great Duke of –, on his way down to the House of Lords, going very slowly, his head inclined on one side, his iron-cast features overspread with an expression of stern thoughtfulness. He did not observe Mr. Aubrey—in fact, he seemed too much absorbed with his own thoughts to observe or recognize anybody; yet he now and then mechanically raised his finger to his hat, in acknowledgment of the obeisances of those who saluted him as he passed. Poor Aubrey sighed; and felt as if circumstances had placed him at an immeasurable distance from the man whom, so lately, he had entertained familiarly at dinner; that there seemed suddenly to exist, as it were, a great and impassable gulf between them.

On reaching his house in Grosvenor Street, his heart fluttered while he knocked and rang; and he seemed to himself to shrink from the accustomed obsequious voice and manner of the powdered menial who admitted him. Having ordered a slight dinner, he repaired to his library. The only letter which had arrived since he had left in the morning, bore the Grilston postmark, and was in the handwriting of Mrs. Aubrey. He opened it with trembling eagerness. It was crossed—the dear familiar handwriting!—from beginning to end, and full of heart-subduing tenderness. Then it had a little enclosure, with a strange, straggling superscription, "To my Papa;" and, on opening it, he read, in similar characters—

> "My dear Papa, I love you very very much. Do come home. Mamma sends her love. Your dutiful son,
> *"Charles Aubrey.*
>
> "P. S.—Agnes sends her love; she cannot write because she is so little. Please to come home directly.
> *"Charles A., Yatton."*

Aubrey saw how it was—that Mrs. Aubrey had either affected to write in her little son's name, or had actually guided his pen. On the outside she had written in pencil—

> "Charles says, he hopes that you will answer his letter directly."

Aubrey's lip quivered, and his eyes filled with tears. Putting the letters into his bosom, he rose and walked to and fro, with feelings which cannot be described. The evening was very gloomy. Rain poured down incessantly. He was the only person in that spacious and elegant house, except the servants left in charge of it; and dreary and desolate enough it appeared. He was but its nominal

owner—their nominal master! In order to save the post, he sat down to write home—(*home*! his heart sank within him at the thought)—and informed Mrs. Aubrey and his sister of the event for which his previous letters had prepared them; adding that he should set off for Yatton by the mail of the ensuing night, and that he was perfectly well. He also wrote a line or two, in large printed characters, by way of answer to his little correspondent, his son, towards whom—ah!—how his heart yearned! and having despatched his packet, probably the last he should ever frank, he partook of a hasty and slight dinner, and then resigned himself to deep meditation upon his critical circumstances. He was perfectly aware of his precise position, in point of law, namely, that he was safe in the possession of the Yatton property, (with the exception of the trifle which was occupied by Jolter, and had been the object of the action just determined,) till another action should have been brought, directly seeking its recovery; and that by forcing his opponent to bring such action, he might put him to considerable risk of retaining his verdict, and thereby greatly harass him, and ward off, indefinitely, the evil day from himself. By these means he might secure time, possibly also, favorable terms for the payment of the dreadful arrear of mesne profits, in which he stood indebted to his successor. To this effect he had received several intimations from Mr. Runnington, as upright and conscientious an adviser as was to be found in the profession. But Mr. Aubrey had decided upon his course; he had taken his ground, and intended to maintain it. However sudden and unlooked-for had been the claim set up against him, it had been deliberately and solemnly confirmed by the law of the land; and he had no idea but of yielding to it a prompt and hearty obedience. He resolved, therefore, to waste no time—to fritter away no energy in feeble dalliance with trouble; but to face her boldly. He determined to instruct Mr. Runnington, on the morrow, to write to his opponent's solicitors, informing them that within three weeks' time, the estates at Yatton would be delivered up to their client, Mr. Titmouse, and also to arrange for the quickest possible disposal of his house in Grosvenor Street, and his wines and his furniture, both there and at Yatton. He resolved, moreover, to take forthwith the necessary steps for vacating his seat in Parliament, by applying for the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds; and having determined on these arrangements, consequent upon the adverse decision of the Court of King's Bench of that day, he experienced the momentary relief and satisfaction of the seaman who has completely prepared his vessel for the approaching storm. He felt, indeed, relieved, for a while, from a dreadful pressure.

"And what, now, have I really to complain of?" said he to himself; "why murmur presumptuously and vainly against the dispensations of Providence? I thank God that I am still able to recognize His hand in what has befallen me, and to believe that *He hath done all things well*; that prosperity and adversity are equally, from Him, means of accomplishing *His* all-wise purposes! Is it for *me*, poor insect! to question the goodness, the wisdom, or the justice of my Maker? I thank God for the firm belief I have, that *He governs the world in righteousness*, and that He has declared that He will protect and bless those who sincerely endeavor to discover, and conform to His will concerning them. He it was who placed me in my late condition of prosperity and eminence; why should I fret, when He sees fit gently to remove me from it, and place me in a different sphere of exertion and suffering? If the dark heathen could spend a life in endeavoring to steel his heart against the sense of suffering, and to look with cheerless indifference upon the vicissitudes of life, shall I, a Christian, shrink with impatience and terror from the first glimpse of adversity? Even at the worst, how favored is my situation in comparison of that of millions of my fellow-creatures? Shall I—may I not—lessen my own sufferings, by the contemplation of those which the Almighty has thought fit to inflict upon my brethren? What if I, and those whom I love, were the subjects of direful disease—of vice—of dishonor? What if I were the object of the just and universal contempt of mankind; given up to a reprobate mind; miserable here, and without hope hereafter? Here have I health, a loving family—have had the inestimable advantages of education, and even now, in the imminent approach of danger, am enabled to preserve, in some measure, a composure of feeling, a resolution—which will support me, and those who are dearer to me than life." Here his heart beat quickly, and

he walked rapidly to and fro. "I am confident that Providence will care for them! As for me, even in sight of the more serious and startling peril which menaces me—what is it to a Christian but a trial of his constancy? *There hath no temptation taken you*, say the Scriptures written for our instruction, *but such as is common to man*;[7] *but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*." This consolatory passage led Aubrey, in a calm and exalted mood of mind, to meditate upon that picture of submission to manifold misfortune, simple and sublime beyond all comparison or approach, drawn by the pencil of one inspired with wisdom from on high—calculated at once to solemnize, to strengthen, and elevate the heart and character of man; and which is to be found in the first and second chapters of the *Book of Job*. Oh reader! who, brilliant as may be at this moment your position in life, may have been heretofore, or may be hereafter, placed in circumstances of dreadful suffering and peril, suffer him whose humble labors now for a moment occupy your attention, reverently to refer you again and yet again, to that memorable passage of holy writ! With danger surrounding him, with utter ruin staring him in the face, Mr. Aubrey read this passage of Scripture; his shaken spirit gathered from it calmness and consolation; and after a while, retiring early to bed, he enjoyed a night of tranquil repose.

"These wretches are determined not to let the grass grow underneath their feet, Mr. Aubrey," said Mr. Runnington, who, the next morning, made his appearance at breakfast, pursuant to appointment; "within two hours' time of the court's delivering judgment, yesterday afternoon, I received the following communication." He handed to Mr. Aubrey this letter:—

"Saffron Hill, 25th April 18—.

"Gentlemen:

"*Doe* d. *Titmouse* v. *Jolter*.

"The rule for a new trial herein having been this day discharged, and the unanimous judgment of the court delivered in favor of the claims to the Yatton estate, of the lessor of the plaintiff, in the present action, we shall feel obliged by an intimation from you, at your earliest possible convenience, of the course which your client may think fit to adopt. You are, of course, aware that we are now in a situation to attack, successfully, the entire property at Yatton, at present in the possession of Mr. Aubrey; and that, had we thought fit, we might have sought and recovered it all in the action which has just been decided in favor of our client. It is now in our power greatly to *strengthen* the evidence adduced at the late trial: and we beg to be informed whether it is your client's intention to put Mr. Titmouse to the enormous expense, and delay, of a second trial, the issue of which cannot be doubtful; or, with the promptitude and candor which are to be expected from a gentleman of the station and character of your client, at once to yield to our client the substantial fruits of his verdict.

"If his reasonable wishes and expectations in this matter should be disregarded and frustrated, we would merely intimate that it will be for your client most seriously to weigh the consequences; to see whether such a line of conduct may not greatly prejudice his interests, and place him in a far worse position than, perhaps, he would otherwise have occupied. As we understand your client to be in town, we trust you will forgive us for requesting you immediately to communicate with him; and that at your earliest convenience you will enable us to announce the result to our client.

—We are, gentlemen, your obedient servants,

"Quirk, Gammon, & Snap."Messrs. Runnington & Co."

[7] Note 7. Page 49.

"Well—I own I see nothing to find fault with," said Mr. Aubrey, calmly, but with a suppressed sigh, as soon as he had read the letter.

"Rather quick work, too—is it not, Mr. Aubrey?—within an hour or two after judgment pronounced in their favor:—but, to be sure, it's very excusable, when you consider the line of business and the sort of clients that Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap are accustomed to."

"I have made up my mind as to the course I shall adopt," said Mr. Aubrey.

"Oh, of course, that is quite clear!" said Mr. Runnington, pouring out his coffee—"we shall stand another shot, and see if they've ammunition enough left for the purpose: and we'll tender a bill of exceptions, and carry the case into the Exchequer Chamber, and thence into the House of Lords—ah! we'll *work* them, I warrant them!"—and he rubbed his hands, with a little excitement in his manner.

"Why, Mr. Runnington," answered Mr. Aubrey, gravely, "would it not be wanton—most unconscientious—in me to put them to the expense and anxiety of a second trial, when the whole case, on both sides, has been fairly brought before both the court and the jury?"

"Good heavens, Mr. Aubrey!" exclaimed Mr. Runnington, with visible amazement—"who ever heard of an estate of even one or two hundred a-year being surrendered after one assault?"

"If it were ten thousand times ten thousand a-year, I would submit—after such a trial as ours!" said Mr. Aubrey, calmly.

"How do we know what fraud and perjury may have been resorted to in order to secure the late verdict, and which we may have the means of exploding against the next trial? Ah, Mr. Aubrey, you don't know the character of Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap in the profession; they learn a fresh trick from every scoundrel, swindler, and thief, whose case they undertake."

"I thought that fraud and perjury were never to be presumed, Mr. Runnington! Besides, had we not the advantage of most eminent, acute, and experienced counsel? How could it escape *them*?"

"I would only venture to remind you," said Mr. Runnington, firmly but respectfully, "of the observations of the Attorney-General, at our last consultation."

"I thought I was unanswered, Mr. Runnington, though I did not feel at liberty to press the matter," replied Mr. Aubrey, with a melancholy smile.

"Excuse me, but we *must* take the chance of a second trial," said Mr. Runnington.

"I have decided upon the course I shall adopt," replied Mr. Aubrey, calmly and determinedly —"I beg you, Mr. Runnington, to write this day to the gentlemen upon the other side, and inform them that within three weeks I shall be prepared to deliver up possession of Yatton."

"My dear sir!—Do I hear aright?" exclaimed Mr. Runnington, with some agitation. "Deliver up possession of the estates? and within three weeks? My ears are deceiving me!"

"That was what I said—or meant to say—Mr. Runnington," replied Mr. Aubrey, rather peremptorily.

"I give you my honor, Mr. Aubrey, that in the whole course of my practice I never heard of such a procedure!" said Mr. Runnington, with a half-desperate air.

"And I shall further request you to state that the last quarter's rents are in my banker's hands, and will be paid over to the order of Mr. Titmouse"–

"Good gracious, Mr. Aubrey!" interrupted Mr. Runnington, with an air of deep concern.

"I have well considered the position in which I am placed," said Mr. Aubrey, with a serious air.

"It is very painful for me to mention the subject, Mr. Aubrey; but have you adverted to the *mesne* profits?"

"I have. It is, indeed, a very fearful matter: and I frankly own that I see no way open before me, but to trust to the forbearance of"–

"Forbearance!—The *forbearance* of Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap!! or of any one counselled by them!"

"Why, what can I do? I might as well undertake to pay off the national debt as the sum of sixty thousand pounds!"

"That's just the very thing," replied Mr. Runnington, with a dismayed air.

"Whatever honorable negotiation can effect, I leave it in your hands to do. With reference to the time which may be allowed for liquidating this frightful demand"—Mr. Aubrey changed color, but spoke with firmness—"I must own this to be a matter which has occasioned me inexpressible anxiety, Mr. Runnington. I really do not see what length of time will enable me to discharge so vast a sum of money, or even to make any sensible impression upon it. I am quite at the mercy of my enemies!" Here both were silent for some time.

"At one time, I fancied that in a case so grievously hard as yours," said Mr. Runnington, with a sigh—"you might obtain relief from a Court of Equity from the payment of the mesne profits, on the ground of your total ignorance of the title of Titmouse; and I laid a case before the most skilful lawyer in the Court of Chancery—but alas! the answer was in the negative—that the court had no power whatever to deprive a man of what he had proved to be his strict legal rights"–

"Nor can I, Mr. Runnington, see on what principle such an interference could be supported![8] Besides—can I *entirely* acquit myself of negligence? Have I not been culpably forgetful of the suggestions which you made to me at the time of my marriage settlement? No, no! I feel myself bound hand and foot"–

At this moment a thundering appeal to the knocker of the door announced an arrival; and presently the servant entered and stated that Lord C– had called, and was waiting in the library. After repeating two or three directions to Mr. Runnington, Mr. Aubrey left him; and presently entered the library, where Lord C– was waiting to receive him. Lord C– was a middle-aged man, tall, of elegant person, with a very handsome and intellectual countenance, and most winning address; he was a thorough politician, and possessed of eloquence, immense practical knowledge, and a commanding intellect. He was made for eminent office; and got through the most complicated and harassing business with ease and celerity. He had for several years entertained a sincere regard for Mr. Aubrey, whom he considered to be a very rising man in the House of Commons, and to have rendered him, on several occasions, special service in debate. He had been much shocked to hear of the sudden misfortune which had befallen Mr. Aubrey; and had now come to him with a sincere desire to be of service; and also, not without a faint hope of prevailing upon him to come down that evening, and support them in a very close division. He was as kind-hearted a man as—a keen politician *could* be.

"I am really shocked beyond expression to hear all this," said he, after Aubrey had, at his earnest request, explained the position in which he was placed; the dreadful loss he had sustained, the still more dreadful liabilities to which he was subject. "Really," exclaimed his Lordship, "who can be safe? It might have happened to me—to any of us! Forgive me, my dear Aubrey," he continued earnestly, "if I venture to express a hope that at all events Mrs. Aubrey and your family are provided for, and your very lovely sister; they, I trust, are out of the reach of inconvenience?" Mr. Aubrey's lips quivered, and he remained silent.

---

[8] Note 8. Page 54.It might be inferred, from a somewhat loose statement in an English law treatise, that in a case like that of Mr. Aubrey—viz. of possession of property in entire ignorance that it belonged to another—a Court of Equity would protect against the rightful owner's claim for the mesne profits. Such, however, is by no means the case. Mr. Titmouse had recovered at law—by the superior strength of his title, and without requiring any assistance whatever from a Court of Equity; the mesne profits, therefore, were absolutely his—and any interference, by a Court of Equity, to deprive him of them, would have been an act of direct spoliation. Such a notion, therefore, is utterly destitute of foundation. If Mr. Titmouse had been compelled to seek the assistance of a Court of Equity in order to prosecute his claim, and had clearly been guilty of negligence or fraud; it is possible that some terms might have been imposed upon him, with reference to the mesne profits to be wrung from his comparatively-speaking innocent opponent—but even then, it is conceived that Equity would be very slow and jealous in exercising such a stretch of power. The Roman law took a different view of the subject, regarding him—*qui justas causas habuisset quare bona ad se pertinere existimasset*, (Dig. Lib. v. Tit. iii. 1, 20, &c.)—with great leniency, and exempting him from payment of mesne profits accrued previous to the action. According to the law of Scotland, a *bonâ fide* possessor evicted (i. e. turned out) by a person having a better right, is entitled to retain the fruits or profits (called "*violent profits*") which he may have reaped or received during his *bonâ fide* possession. It would seem, however, that this doctrine is based not solely upon the *bonâ fide* ignorance of the ousted party, but upon the concurring *negligence* and *delay* of his victorious opponent.

"Allow me a friend's freedom, Aubrey, and let me repeat my question; are your family provided for?"

"I will be frank, Lord C–," replied Mr. Aubrey, with a strong effort to preserve his composure. "The little provision which had been made for them, is lost, with Yatton; but for them—my wife, my children, my sister—I could have submitted to this misfortune with unshrinking fortitude; but they are, alas, involved in my ruin! My wife had nothing when I married her; and of course the settlements I made on her were out of the Yatton property; as also was the little income left my sister by my father. With Yatton all is gone—that is the plain fact; and there is no disguising it."

Lord C– seemed much moved.

"The Duke of –, I, and two or three other of your friends, were talking about these matters last night; we wish we could serve you. What is the sort of foreign service you would prefer, Aubrey?"

"*Foreign* service?" echoed Mr. Aubrey, significantly.

"Yes; an entire change of scene would be highly serviceable in diverting your thoughts from the distressing subjects which here occupy them, and must continue to occupy them for some time to come. Can there be a doubt of it?"

"It is very kindly meant, Lord C–; but do you really think I can for a single moment entertain the idea of quitting the country to escape from pecuniary liability?"

"That's the point, exactly; I decidedly think you ought to do so; that you *must*," replied Lord C–, in a matter-of-fact manner.

"Nothing upon earth shall induce me to do so," replied Mr. Aubrey, firmly. "The bare idea shocks me. It would be the meanest, most unprincipled conduct—it would reflect disgrace on the king's service."

"Poh—this is mere eccentricity—knight-errantry; I'm sure that when you are in a calmer mood you will think differently. Upon my honor, I never heard of such absurdity as yours, in my life. Are you to stay at home, to have your hands tied behind your back, and be thrust into prison—to court destruction for yourself and your family?" Mr. Aubrey turned aside his head, and remained silent.

"I must plead in favor of Mrs. Aubrey—your children—your sweet lovely sister;—good God! it's quite shocking to think of what you are bringing them to."

"You torture my feelings, Lord C–," said Mr. Aubrey, tremulously and very pale; "but you do not convince my judgment. Every dictate of conscience and honor combines to assure me that I should not listen to your proposal."

"Good God! what an outrage on common sense!—But has anything been yet said on the subject of these liabilities—these *mesne* profits, as I think you said they are called?"

"Nothing; but they follow as a matter of course."

"How is it that you owe *only* sixty thousand pounds, Aubrey?"

"*Only* sixty thousand!" echoed Mr. Aubrey, amazedly.

"At the rate of ten thousand a-year, you must have had at least a hundred thousand pounds of the money belonging to your successor"–

"The statute of limitations prevents more than six years' arrears being recoverable."

"But do you intend, Aubrey, to avail yourself of such a protection against the just claims of this poor, unfortunate, ill-used gentleman? Are not the remaining forty thousand pounds justly due—money of his which you have been making away with? Will you let a mere technical rule of law outweigh the dictates of honor and conscience?"

"I really don't exactly understand your drift, Lord C–," said Mr. Aubrey, coloring visibly.

"Well—I will explain. Your sovereign has a right to command your services; and, by obeying him and serving your country, you are enabled to prevent a malignant opponent from ruining you and your family, by extorting a vast sum of money not equitably due: I protest I see no difference in principle, Aubrey, between availing yourself of the statute of limitations, and of the call of the king

to foreign service;—but we must talk of this again. By the way, what is the name of your worthy opponent? Tittlemouse, or some such strange name?"

"Titmouse!—By the way, you lose a seat for Yatton," said Aubrey, with a faint smile.

Lord C– pricked up his ears. "Ay, ay! how's that?"

"The gentleman whom you have named professes, I understand, Liberal principles; probably he will sit for the borough himself; at all events, he will return the member."

"He's a poor ignorant creature, isn't he? What has made him take up with Liberal principles? By taking a little notice of him early, one might—eh?—influence him;—but—of course you don't intend to vacate this session?"

"I intend this day to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds; and this evening, if you like, a new writ may be moved for the borough of Yatton."

"You *must* come down to-night, my dear Aubrey, you really must," said Lord C–, with undisguised anxiety—with more than he had shown during the interview. "The numbers will run very close; they are stirring heaven and earth!—Good heavens! my dear Aubrey, a vote's invaluable to-night;—gad, you *sha'n't* have the Chiltern Hundreds;[9] you mustn't really apply for it—at all events, not till to-morrow."

"I shall sit no more in the House of Commons," said Mr. Aubrey, with a sad determined air; "besides, I leave for Yatton by to-night's mail. There are those waiting for me whom you would not have me disappoint, Lord C–!"

"Not for worlds, my dear Aubrey," replied Lord C–, half absently. He was intensely disappointed at not obtaining Mr. Aubrey's vote that evening; and rose to go.

"Then I am to direct to Yatton, when I may have occasion to write to you?" said he.

"For the next three weeks only—my movements after that period are not yet fixed."

"Adieu, Aubrey; and I entreat of you to remember me most sincerely to Mrs. Aubrey and your sister; and when you look at them,—recollect—pray, recollect our conversation of to-day."

With this Lord C– took his departure, and left poor Aubrey much depressed. He quickly, however, roused himself, and occupied the principal part of the day in making the necessary and melancholy arrangements for breaking up his establishment in Grosvenor Street, and disposing of his wines, books, and furniture at Yatton. He also instructed a house-agent to look out for two or three respectable but small houses in the outskirts of town, out of which might be chosen the one appearing most suitable to himself and Mrs. Aubrey, on their arrival in London. About eight o'clock he got into the York mail, and his heart was heavy within him.

[9] Note 9. Page 58.It is by no means a matter of course, to apply for and obtain this nominal appointment, which occasions *ipso facto* the vacating a seat in Parliament. It is a matter of discretion with the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and he has *refused* it during the present session [1844] to several applicants.

CHAPTER III

The result of a very long consultation between Mr. Runnington and his partners, held on the day after his last interview with Mr. Aubrey, was, that he drew up the following draft of a letter, addressed to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap:—

"Lincoln's Inn, 26th April 18—.

"Gentlemen:

"*Doe* d. *Titmouse* v. *Jolter*.

"In answer to your letter of yesterday, (the 25th inst.,) we beg to inform you, that after the judgment in this cause pronounced yesterday in the Court of King's Bench, our client, Mr. Aubrey, does not intend to resist the claim of Mr. Titmouse to the residue of the Yatton property. We now, therefore, beg to give you notice, that on the 17th of next month you will be at liberty, on behalf of your client, Mr. Titmouse, to take possession of all the property at Yatton, at present in the possession of Mr. Aubrey. The whole of the last quarter's rents, due at Ladyday, have been paid into the bank of Messrs. Harley at Grilston, and will, on the day above mentioned, be placed at the disposal of your client.

"We are also instructed to request the delivery of your bill at as early a period as may suit your convenience, with a view to its immediate examination and settlement.

"We cannot forbear adding, while thus implicitly following the instructions of our client, our very great surprise and regret at the course which he has thought fit to adopt; since we have the strongest reasons for believing, that had he been disposed to contest your client's claim farther, in accordance with advice received from a high quarter, his case would have been materially strengthened, and your difficulties greatly increased, and rendered, in fact, absolutely insuperable. We feel confident that the magnanimity displayed by our client, will be duly appreciated by *yours*.

"We are, Gentlemen, your obedient servants,

"Runnington & Co.

"Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, & Snap."

"Really," said Mr. Runnington, when he had read over the above to his partners, "I *must* throw in a word or two about those accursed mesne profits—yet it's a very ticklish subject, especially with such people as these—eh?"

One partner shook his head, and the other looked very thoughtful.

"We must not compromise Mr. Aubrey," said the former of the two.

"We have had no instructions on that point," said the latter,—"on the contrary, you told us yourself that your instructions were to announce an unconditional surrender."

"That may be; but in so desperate a business as this, I do think we have a discretion to exercise on behalf of himself and family, which I must say, he seems quite incapable of exercising himself. Nay, upon my honor, I think we are *bound* not to forego the slightest opportunity of securing an advantage for our client in this unrighteous claim!"

His partners seemed struck with his observation; and Mr. Runnington, after a few moments' consideration, added the following postscript:—

"P. S.—As to the *mesne profits*, by the way, of course we anticipate no difficulty in effecting an amicable arrangement satisfactory to both parties, due

> consideration being had for the critical position in which our client finds himself placed so suddenly and unexpectedly. Indeed, it is not difficult to conceive that Mr. Aubrey, in taking the step of which we have above advised you, must have contemplated"–(here Mr. Runnington paused for a considerable time,) "being met in a similar frank, liberal, and equitable spirit."

It was agreed, at length, that the whole amount and effect of the above postscript ought to be regarded as a spontaneous suggestion of Messrs. Runnington, not in any way implicating, or calculated in any event to annoy, Mr. Aubrey; and a fair copy of the letter and postscript having been made, it was signed by the head of the firm, and forthwith despatched to Saffron Hill.

"Struck, by Jove, Gammon!" exclaimed Mr. Quirk, as, with the above letter open in his hands, he hurried, the instant after he had read it, into the room of his wily partner, and threw it down exultingly before him. Gammon read it with apparent calmness, but a slight flush overspread his cheek; and, as he finished the perusal, a subdued smile of excitement and triumph stole over his acute and placid countenance.

"Lord, Gammon! isn't it glorious?" quoth Mr. Quirk, heatedly, rubbing his hands together; "give us your hand, friend Gammon! We've fought a precious hard battle together"—and he shook his partner's hand with vehement cordiality. "This fellow Aubrey is a trump—isn't he?—Egad, if I'd been in his shoes—one way or another, I'd have stuck at Yatton for a dozen years to come—ah, ha!"

"Yes, I am sure you would—if you had been able," replied Gammon, dryly, and with a smile —the real character of which was not perceived by Mr. Quirk.

"Ay, that I would," replied he, with a triumphant chuckle—"but now to come to business. By next quarter-day Titmouse will have £5,000 in hard cash—half of it on the 17th of next month.—Lord! what have we done for him!" he added with a sort of sigh.

"We've put an ape into possession of Paradise—that's all"—said Gammon, absently and half aloud, and bitterly and contemptuously.

"Humph!—what of that?" said Mr. Quirk—"It answers *our* purposes, at any rate! By the way, Gammon, you see what's said about our bill—eh? The sooner it's made out the better, I should say —and—ahem! hem!—while Mr. Aubrey's on the tight rope he won't think of looking down at the particular items, will he? I should say, *now's* our time; and we should strike while the iron's hot! I've got *rather* a stiff entry, I can assure you. I must say Snap's done his duty; and *I've* not had my eyes shut—or my pen idle! You know one *must* live in these hard times—eh?" Here Mr. Quirk winked very knowingly.

"You must not *overdo* it, Mr. Quirk—but all that I leave, as usual, to your admirable management, as to that of a first-rate man of business. You know I'm a sad hand at accounts; but you and Snap are perfect adepts—in short, I'm satisfied you'll do all that should be done."

"Ay, ay, trust us!" interrupted Quirk, quickly, with a significant nod, and fancying himself and Snap already at work, plundering the poor Aubreys. "And, by the way, Gammon, there are the mesne profits—that's a mighty fine postscript of theirs, isn't it?" and replacing his spectacles, he read it over aloud. "All my eye, of course!" he added, as he laid down the letter—"but I suppose one must give 'em a little time; it *is* a little hard on him just at present; but then, to be sure, that's *his* look-out—not ours, or Titmouse's!—Off-hand, I should say we ought to be content with—say—twenty thousand down, and the rest within two years, so as to give him time to look about him a little"–

"That will be quite an after consideration," said Mr. Gammon, who, for the last few minutes, had appeared lost in thought.

"Egad—an *after* consideration? Hang me if I think so, Gammon! There's a certain *bond*—eh? don't you recollect"–

"I assure you, Mr. Quirk, that my eye is fixed quite as steadily and anxiously on that point as yours," said Gammon, gravely.

"Thank you—thank you, Gammon!" replied Quirk, with the air of a man suddenly relieved from apprehension—"it couldn't possibly be in better hands. Lud—to go wrong *there*! It would send me to my grave at a hand gallop—it would, so help me Heaven, Gammon!—Titmouse—by the way—is a queer hand to deal with—isn't he? Wasn't he strange and bumptious the other day? Egad, it made me quake! Need we tell him, just yet," he dropped his voice, "of the letter we've got? Couldn't we safely say only that they have sent us word that we shall have Yatton by the 17th of next month?"

"Very great caution is necessary, Mr. Quirk, just now"–

"You *don't* think the young scamp's going to turn round on us, and snap his fingers in our face, eh?" inquired Mr. Quirk, apprehensively, violently twirling about his watch-key.

"If you leave him implicitly to me, you shall get all you want," replied Gammon, very gravely, and very pointedly. Quirk's color changed a little, as he felt the keen gray eye of Gammon fixed upon him, and he involuntarily shrank under it.

"You'll excuse me, Gammon," at length said he, with rather a disturbed air; "but there's no fathoming you, when you get into one of your mysterious humors; and you always look so particularly strange whenever we get on this subject! What can you know that I don't—or *ought* not to know?"

"Nothing—nothing, I assure you," replied Gammon, with a gay smile.

"Well, I should have *thought* not. But, coming back to the main point, if one could but *touch* some part of that same ten thousand pounds, I *should* be a happy man!—Consider Gammon, what a draught there has been on my purse for this last sixteen months! Ecod!—the sleepless nights it has cost me!"

"Well, can you doubt being soon richly repaid, my dear sir? Only don't be too hasty."

"I take it, Gammon, we've a lien on the rents now in the banker's hands, and to become due next quarter-day, and on the first instalment of the mesne profits, both for our bill of costs, and in respect of that same bond?"

"Mesne profits, Mr. Quirk?" echoed Gammon, rather quickly; "you seem to take it for granted that they are all ready to be paid over! Even supposing Titmouse not to grow restive, do you suppose it probable that Mr. Aubrey, after so vast and sudden a sacrifice, can have more than a very few thousands—probably hundreds—to keep him and his family from immediate want, since we have reason to believe he has got no other resources than Yatton?"

"Not got 'em—not got 'em? D—n him! then he must look sharp and *get* 'em, that's all! You know we can't be trifled with; we must look after the interests of—Titmouse. And what's he to start with, if there's no mesne profits forthcoming? But, hang it! they must; I should say a gentle pressure, by-and-by, as soon as Aubrey's fairly got out of Yatton, must produce money, or *security*—he must know quantities of people of rank and substance that would rush forward, if they once heard him squeal"–

"Ah, you're for putting the thumbscrews on at once—eh?" inquired Gammon, with subdued energy, and a very strange sort of smile.

"Ay—capital—that's *just* what I meant!"—quoth Quirk.

"Eugh! you heartless old reprobate!" thought Gammon, nearly on the point of expressing as much; but his momentary excitement passed off unobserved by Mr. Quirk. "And, I must say, I agree with you," added Gammon, calmly, "we ought in justice to see you first reimbursed your very heavy outlays, Mr. Quirk."

"Well, that's honorable, Gammon.—Oh, Gammon, how I *wish* you would let me make a friend of you!" suddenly added Mr. Quirk, eying wistfully his surprised companion.

"If you have one sincere, disinterested friend in the world, Mr. Quirk, I am he," said Mr. Gammon, throwing great warmth into his manner, perceiving that Mr. Quirk was laboring with some communication of which he wished to deliver himself.

"Gammon, Gammon! how I *wish* I could think so!" replied Quirk, looking earnestly, yet half distrustingly, at Gammon, and fumbling about his hands in his pockets. The mild and friendly

expression of Gammon's countenance, however, invited communicativeness; and after softly opening and shutting the two doors, to ascertain that no one was trying to overhear what might be passing, he returned to his chair, which he drew closer to Gammon, who noticed this air of preparation with not a little curiosity.

"I may be wrong, Gammon," commenced Mr. Quirk, in a low tone; "but I do believe you've always felt a kind of personal friendship towards me; and there ought to be no secrets among friends. *Friends*, indeed? Perhaps it's premature to mention so small a matter; but at a certain silversmith's, not a thousand miles from the Strand, there's at this moment in hand, as a present from me to you"—(Oh dear, dear! Mr. Quirk! what a shocking untruth! and at your advanced period of life, too!)—"as elegant a gold snuff-box as can be made, with a small inscription on the lid. I hope you won't value it the less for its being the gift of old Caleb Quirk"–he paused and looked earnestly at Mr. Gammon.

"My dear Mr. Quirk, you have taken me," said his bland partner, apparently with great emotion, "quite by surprise. Value it? I will preserve it to the latest moment of my life, as a memorial of one whom the more I know of, the more I respect and admire!"

"You, Gammon, are in your prime—scarce even that—but I am growing old"–tears appeared to glisten in the old gentleman's eyes; Gammon, looking much moved, shook him cordially by the hand in silence, wondering what upon earth was coming next. "Yes;—old Caleb Quirk's day is drawing to a close—I feel it, Gammon, I feel it! But I shall leave behind me—a—a—child—an only daughter, Gammon;" that gentleman gazed at the speaker with an expression of respectful sympathy;—"Dora: I don't think you can have known Dora so long, Gammon, without feeling a *leetle* interest in her!" Here Gammon's color mounted rapidly; and he looked with feelings of a novel description at his senior partner. Could it be possible that old Quirk wished to bring about a match between his daughter and Mr. Gammon? That gentleman's thoughts were for a moment confused. All he could do was to bow with an earnest—an anxious—a deprecating air; and Mr. Quirk, rather hastily, proceeded, —"and when I assure you, Gammon, that it is in your power to make an old friend and his only daughter happy and proud,"—Gammon began to draw his breath hurriedly, and to look more and more apprehensively at his senior partner,—"in short, my dear friend Gammon, let me out with it at once—my daughter's over head and ears in love with Titmouse! She is, so help me Heaven!"

["Whew!" thought Gammon, suddenly and infinitely relieved.]

"Ah, my dear sir, is that all?" he exclaimed, and shook Mr. Quirk cordially by the hand,—"at length you have made a friend of me indeed! But, to tell you the truth, I have long suspected as much; I have indeed!"

"Have you really? Hang me if anything can escape your lynx's eyes!—Well! there *is* no accounting for tastes, is there?—especially among the women? Poor Dora's quite lost her heart—quite—she has—so help me Heaven!" continued Mr. Quirk, energetically.

"Well, my dear sir, and why this *surprise*?" inquired Gammon, earnestly. "I consider Titmouse to be a very handsome young fellow; and that he is already rapidly acquiring very gentlemanly manners; and as to his *fortune*—really—when one thinks of the thing—it would be most desirable to bring it about! Indeed, the sooner his heart's fixed, and his word's pledged, the better—for you must of course be aware that there will be many schemers on the look-out to entrap his frank and inexperienced nature—look, for instance, at Tag-rag."

"Eugh!" exclaimed Mr. Quirk, with a sudden motion of sickening disgust—"the old beast! I smoked him long ago! Now, *that* I call villany, Gammon; infernal villany! Don't you?"

"Indeed, indeed, Mr. Quirk, I do; I quite agree with you! Upon my honor, I think it is a part of even *my* duty towards our confiding and inexperienced client, if possible, to protect him against such infamous designs."

"Right—right, Gammon; by Jove, you're quite right—I *quite* agree with you!" replied Quirk, earnestly, not observing the lambent smile upon the features of his calm, crafty, and sarcastic companion.

"You see, however," said Gammon, "we've a very delicate and difficult game to play with old Tag-rag. He's certainly a toad, ugly and venomous—but then he's got a jewel in his head—he's got money, you know, and, to serve *our* purposes, we must really give him some hopes about his daughter and Titmouse."

"Faugh! eugh! feugh! Nasty wretch! a little trollop! It makes one sick to hear of her! And, by the way, now we're on that subject, Gammon, what do we want of this wretch Tag-rag, now that Titmouse has actually got the property?"

"Want of him? Money—security, my dear sir!—money!"

"But, curse me! (excuse me, Gammon,) why go to Tag-rag? *That's* what I can't understand! Surely any one will advance almost any amount of money to Titmouse, with such security as he can now give!"

"Very possibly—probably"–

"Possibly? Why, I myself don't mind advancing him five thousand—nay, ten thousand pounds —when we've once got hold of the title-deeds."

"My dear sir," interrupted Gammon, calmly, but with a very serious air, and a slight change of color which did not happen to attract the notice of his eager companion, "there are reasons why I should dissuade you from doing so; upon my word there are; farther than that I do not think it necessary to go; but I have gone far enough, I know well, to do you a real service."

Mr. Quirk listened to all this with an air of the utmost amazement—even open-mouthed amazement. "What reason, Gammon, *can* there be against my advancing money on a security worth at least twenty times the sum borrowed?" he inquired with visible distrust of his companion.

"I can but assure you, that were I called upon to say whether I would advance a serious sum of money to Titmouse on the security of the Yatton estates, I should at all events require a most substantial *collateral* security."

"Mystery again!" exclaimed Mr. Quirk, a sigh of vexation escaping him. "You'll excuse me, Gammon, but you'd puzzle an angel, to say nothing of the devil! May I presume for one moment, so far on our personal and professional relationship, as to ask what the reason is on which your advice rests?"

"Mere caution—excessive caution—anxiety to place you out of the way of all risk. Surely, is your borrower so soon to be pronounced firm in the saddle?"

"If you know anything, Gammon, that I don't, it's your bounden duty to communicate it! *Look at our articles!*"

"It is; *but do I* know anything! Prove that, Mr. Quirk, and you need trouble yourself no more! —but, in the mean while, (without saying how much I feel hurt at your evident distrust,) I have but a word or two further to add on this point."

When Mr. Gammon chose, he could assume an expression of feature, a tone of voice, and a manner which indicated to the person he was addressing, that he was announcing a matured opinion, an inflexible determination—and this, moreover, in the calmest, quietest way imaginable. Thus it was that he now said to Mr. Quirk, "My opinion is, that you should get *some third party* or parties to advance any required sum, and prevail upon Tag-rag to join in a collateral security, without—if possible—making him aware of the extent of liability he is incurring. By exciting him with the ridiculous notion of an attachment between his daughter and Titmouse, he may be induced to give his signature, as to some complimentary matter of form only—Now, that's my opinion, Mr. Quirk; not lightly or hastily formed; and it rests upon a deep feeling of personal regard towards you, and also our common interests."

Mr. Quirk had listened to this communication in perturbed silence, eying the speaker with a ludicrous expression of mingled chagrin, apprehension, and bewilderment. "Gammon," at length said he, affecting a smile, "do you remember, when you, and I, and Dora, went to the play to see some German thing or other—Foss was the name, wasn't it?"

"Faust—Faust," interrupted Gammon, curiously.

"Well; and now, what was the name of that fellow that was always—Meph—Meph—what was it?"

"Mephistopheles," replied Gammon, unable to repress a smile.

"Ah—yes! so it was. That's all; I only wanted to think of the name—I'd forgotten it. I beg your pardon, Gammon."

This was poor Mr. Quirk's way of being very sarcastic with his friend. He thought that he had now cut him to the very quick.

"If it hadn't been for what's passed between us to-day, Gammon, I should almost begin to think that you were not sincere in your friendship"–

"Did I ever deceive you? Did I ever attempt to overreach you in anything, Mr. Quirk?"

"N—o—o—," replied Mr. Quirk—but not in the readiest manner, or most confident tone in the world,—"I certainly can't say I ever found you out—but I'll tell you what, we each keep a precious sharp look-out after each other, too—don't we?" he inquired with a faint smile, which seemed for a moment reflected upon the face of Gammon.

"How long," said the latter, "I am to be the subject of such unkind suspicions, I do not know; but your nature is suspicious; and as every one has his fault, that is the alloy in the otherwise pure gold of your manly, generous, and straightforward character. Time may show how you have wronged me. My anxious wish is, Mr. Quirk, to witness your daughter occupying a position in which we may all be proud to see her." Here a smile shot across Quirk's anxious countenance, like evening sunshine on troubled waters.

"I do really believe, Gammon," said he, eagerly, "that Dora's just the kind of girl to suit Titmouse"–

"So indeed, my dear sir, do I. There's a mingled softness and spirit in Miss Quirk"–

"She's a good girl, a good girl, Gammon! I hope he'll use her well if he gets her." His voice trembled. "She's got very much attached to him! Gad, she's quite altered lately; and my sister tells me that she's always playing dismal music when he's not there. But we can talk over these matters at another time. Gad, Gammon, you can't think how it's relieved me, to open my mind to you on this matter! We quite understand each other *now*, Gammon—eh?"

"Quite," replied Gammon, pointedly; and Mr. Quirk having quitted the room, the former prepared to answer Messrs. Runnington's letter. But first he leaned back, and reflected on several points of their late conversation. Of course, he had resolved that Miss Quirk should never become Mrs. Titmouse! And what struck him as not a little singular was this; viz. that Mr. Quirk should have made no observation on the circumstance that Gammon allowed him to risk his daughter, and her all, upon chances which he pronounced too frail to warrant advancing a thousand or two of money! Yet so it was.

This was the answer he presently wrote to the letter of Messrs. Runnington:—

"Saffron Hill, 26th April 18—.

"Gentlemen:

"*Doe* d. *Titmouse* v. *Jolter*.

"We are favored with your letter of this day's date; and beg to assure you how very highly we appreciate the prompt and honorable course which has been taken by your client, under circumstances calculated to excite the greatest possible commiseration. Every expression of respectful sympathy, on our parts, and on that of our client, Mr. Titmouse, which you may think fit to convey to your distinguished client, is his.

"We shall be prepared to receive possession of the Yatton estates on the day you mention—namely, the 17th May next, on behalf of our client, Mr. Titmouse;

on whose behalf, also, we beg to thank you for your communication concerning the last quarter's rents.

"With reference to the question of the mesne profits, we cannot doubt that your client will promptly pursue the same line of honorable conduct which he has hitherto adopted; and sincerely trust that a good understanding in this matter will speedily exist between our respective clients.

"As you have intimated a wish upon the subject, we beg to inform you that we have given instructions for making out and delivering our bill herein.

"We are, Gentlemen,
"Your obedient humble servants,
"Quirk, Gammon, & Snap.

"Messrs. Runnington & Co."

Having finished writing the above letter, Gammon sat back in his chair, with folded arms, and entered upon a long train of thought—revolving many matters which were worthy of the profound consideration they then received.

When Gammon and Titmouse returned to town from York, they were fortunate in having the inside of the coach to themselves for nearly the whole of the way—an opportunity which Gammon improved to the utmost, by deepening the impression he had already made in the mind of Titmouse, of the truth of one great fact—namely, that he and his fortunes would quickly part company, if Gammon should at any time so will—which never would, however, come to pass, as long as Titmouse recognized and deferred to the authority of Gammon in all things. In vain did Titmouse inquire how this could be. Gammon was impenetrable, mysterious, authoritative; and at length enjoined Titmouse to absolute secrecy concerning the existence of the fact in question, on pain of the infliction of those consequences to which I have already alluded. Gammon assured him that there were many plans and plots hatching against him (Titmouse;) but that it was in his (Gammon's) power to protect him from them all. Gammon particularly enjoined him, moreover, to consult the feelings, and attend to the suggestions of Mr. Quirk, wherever Mr. Gammon did not intimate to the contrary; and wound up all by telling him, that as he, Gammon, was the only person on earth—and this he really believed to be the case, as the reader may hereafter see—who knew the exact position of Titmouse, so he had devoted himself for his life to the advancing and securing the interests of that fortunate gentleman.

For about a fortnight after their return, Titmouse, at Gammon's instance, continued at his former lodgings; but at length complained so earnestly of their dismal quietude, and of their being out of the way of "*life*," that Gammon yielded to his wishes, and, together with Mr. Quirk, consented to his removing to a central spot—in fact, to the Cabbage-stalk Hotel, Covent Garden—a queer enough name, to be sure; but it was the family name of a great wholesale green-grocer, who owned most of the property thereabouts. It was not without considerable uneasiness and anxiety that Messrs. Quirk and Snap beheld this change of residence, apprehensive that it might have the effect of estranging Titmouse from them; but since Gammon assented to it, they had nothing for it but to acquiesce, considering Titmouse's proximity to his splendid independence. They resolved, however, as far as in each of them lay, not to let themselves be forgotten by Titmouse. Pending the rule for the new trial, Mr. Quirk had been so confident concerning the issue, that he greatly increased the allowance of Titmouse; to an extent, indeed, which admitted of his entering into almost all the gayeties that his as yet scarce initiated heart could desire. In the first place, he constantly added to his wardrobe. Then he took lessons, every other day, in "the noble art of self-defence;" which gave him an opportunity of forming, with great ease, at once an extensive and brilliant circle of acquaintance. Fencing-rooms, wrestling-rooms, shooting-galleries, places for pigeon-shooting, cock-fighting, dog-fighting, and billiard-rooms; the water, and boat-racing—these were the dazzling scenes which occupied the chief portion of each day. Then, in the evenings, there were theatres, great and small, the various

taverns, and other places of nocturnal resort, which are the secret pride and glory of the metropolis. In addition to this, at an advanced period of the night, or rather very early hour in the morning, he sedulously strove to perfect himself in those higher arts and accomplishments, formerly excelled in by one or two of the more eminent of the youthful aristocracy, viz. breaking windows, pulling bells, wrenching off knockers,[10] extinguishing lamps, tripping up old women, watchmen, and children, and spoiling their clothes;—ah, how often in his humbler days, had his heart panted in noble rivalry of such feats as these, and emulation of the notoriety which they earned for the glittering miscreants excelling in them! Ah, Titmouse, Titmouse! Now is your time! *Macte novâ virtute, puer!*

That he could long frequent such scenes as these without forming an extensive and varied acquaintance, would be a very unlikely thing to suppose; and there was one who would fain have joined him in his new adventures—one who, as I have already intimated, had initiated him into the scenes with which he was now becoming so familiar; I mean Snap, who had been at once his

"Guide, philosopher, and friend;"

but who now had fewer and fewer opportunities of associating with him, inasmuch as his (Snap's) nose was continually "kept at the grindstone" in Saffron Hill, to compensate for the lack of attention to the business of the office of his senior partners, owing to their incessant occupation with the affairs of Titmouse. Still, however, he now and then contrived to remind Titmouse of his (Snap's) existence, by sending him intimations of interesting trials at the Old Bailey and elsewhere, and securing him a good seat to view both the criminal and the spectators—often persons of the greatest rank, fashion, and beauty; for so it happened that, in this country, the more hideous the crime, the more intense the curiosity of the upper classes of both sexes to witness the miscreant perpetrator; the more disgusting the details, the greater the avidity with which they are listened to by the distinguished auditors;—the reason being plain, that, as they have exhausted the pleasures and excitements afforded by their own sphere of action and enjoyment, their palled and sated appetites require novel and more powerful stimulants. Hence, at length, we see "fashionables" peopling even the condemned cell—rushing, in excited groups, after the shuddering malefactor, staggering, half palsied, and with horror-laden eye, on his way to the gallows! As soon as old Quirk had obtained an inkling of Titmouse's taste in these matters, he afforded him many opportunities of gratifying it. Once or twice the old gentleman succeeded in obtaining for him, even the gratification of shaking the cold and pinioned hands of wretches within a few minutes' time of their being led out for execution!

This is a brief and general account of the way in which Titmouse passed his time, and laid the groundwork of that solid, extensive, and practical acquaintance with men and things, which was requisite to enable him to occupy with dignity and advantage the splendid station to which he was on the point of being elevated.

But let us not lose sight of our early and interesting friends, the Tag-rags—a thing which both Quirk and Gammon resolved should not happen to Titmouse: for, on the very first Sunday after his arrival in town from York, a handsome glass-coach might have been seen, about two o'clock in the afternoon, drawing up opposite to the gates of Satin Lodge; from which said coach, the door having been opened, presently descended Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Titmouse. Now, the Tag-rags always dined at about two o'clock on Sundays; and, on the present occasion, Mr., Mrs., and Miss Tag-rag, together with a pretty constant visitor, the Reverend Dismal Horror, were sitting at their dinner-table discussing as savory a leg of roast pork, with apple-sauce, as could at once have tempted and satisfied the most fastidious and the most indiscriminating appetite.

[10] Note 10. Page 75.This species of sport has recently, alas! been seriously interfered with, by the increased power given, in such cases, to the police magistrates.

"Oh, ma!" exclaimed Miss Tag-rag, faintly, changing color, as she caught sight, through the blinds, of the approaching visitors—"if there isn't Mr. Titmouse!" and almost dropping on the table her plate, in which, with an air of tender gallantry, pious Mr. Horror was in the act of depositing some greens, she flew out of the room, darted up-stairs, and in a trice was standing, with beating heart, before her glass, hastily twirling her ringlets round her trembling fingers, and making one or two slight alterations in her dress. Her papa and mamma started up at the same moment, hastily wiping their mouths on the corners of the table-cloth; and, after a hurried apology to their reverend and astounded guest, whom they begged "to go on eating till they came back"—they bounced into the little drawing-room, in just time enough to appear (as they thought) to have been seated there for some time; but they were both rather red in the face, and flustered in their manner. Yet, how abortive was their attempt to disguise the truly disgraceful fact of their having been at dinner when their distinguished visitors arrived! For, firstly, the house was redolent of the odors of roast pork, sage and onion stuffing, and greens; secondly, the red-faced servant girl was peering round the corner of the kitchen stairs, as if watching an opportunity to whip off a small dinner tray that stood between the dining-room and drawing-room; and thirdly, the visitors caught a glimpse of the countenance of the reverend young guest, who was holding open the dining-room door just wide enough to enable him to see who passed on to the drawing-room; for, in truth, the name which had escaped from the lips of Miss Tag-rag, was one which always excited unpleasant feelings in the breast of her spiritual-minded friend.

"Ah! Mr. and Mrs. Tag-rag! 'Pon my soul—glad to see you—and—hope you're all well?" commenced Titmouse, with an air of easy confidence and grace. Mr. Gammon calmly introduced himself and Mr. Quirk.

"We were just going to sit down to—*lunch*," said Mr. Tag-rag, hurriedly.

"You won't take a little, will you, gentlemen?" inquired Mrs. Tag-rag, faintly; and both the worthy couple felt infinite relief on being assured that the great people "had already lunched." Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Tag-rag could take their eyes off Mr. Titmouse, whose easy nonchalance convinced them that he must have been keeping the society of lords. He was just inquiring—as he ran his hand through his hair, and gently smacked his slight ebony cane against his leg—after Miss Tag-rag, when, pale and agitated, and holding in her hand a pocket-handkerchief, which she had first suffused with musk and bergamot, designed to overcome so much of the vulgar odor of dinner as might be lingering about *her*—that interesting young lady entered. Titmouse rose and received her in a familiar, forward manner; she turning white and red by turns. She looked such a shrivelled little ugly formal creature, that Titmouse conceived quite a hatred of her, through recollecting that he had once thought such an inferior piece of goods superfine! Old Quirk and Tag-rag, every now and then, cast distrustful glances at each other; but Gammon kept all in a calm flow of small talk, which at length restored those whom they had come to see, to something like self-possession. As for Mr. Quirk, the more he looked at Miss Tag-rag, the more pride and satisfaction he felt in reflecting upon the unfavorable contrast she must present, in Titmouse's eyes, to Miss Quirk. After a little further conversation, principally concerning the brilliant success of Titmouse, Mr. Quirk came to the business of the day, and invited Mr., Mrs., and Miss Tag-rag to dinner at Alibi House, on the ensuing Sunday, at six o'clock—apologizing for the absence of Miss Quirk, on the score of indisposition—she being at the time in the highest possible state of health. Mrs. Tag-rag was on the point of saying something deprecatory of their dining out on Sunday, as contrary to their rule; but a sudden recollection of the earthly interests she might peril by so doing, aided by a fearfully significant glance from Mr. Tag-rag, restrained her. The invitation was, therefore, accepted in a very obsequious manner; and soon afterwards their great visitors took their departure, leaving Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Tag-rag in a state of very great excitement. Goodness! could there be a doubt that there must be some very potent attraction at Satin Lodge to bring thither Titmouse, after all that had occurred? And where could reside the point of that attraction, but in Miss Tag-rag?

As soon as their visitors' glass-coach had driven off—its inmates laughing heartily at the people they had just quitted—Mr., Mrs., and Miss Tag-rag returned to the dining-table, like suddenly disturbed fowl returning to their roost, when the disturbance has ceased. Profuse were their apologies to Mr. Horror; not aware, however, that he had improved the opportunity afforded by their absence, to recruit his exhausted energies with a couple of glasses of port wine from a decanter which stood on the sideboard—a circumstance which he did not deem important enough to mention. Vehemently suspecting as he did, what was the state of things with reference to Mr. Titmouse and Miss Tag-rag, it was somewhat of a trial of temper to the exemplary young pastor—and calculated to interfere grievously with the preparation for his evening duties—to have to listen, for the remainder of the afternoon, to the praises of Titmouse, and speculations concerning the immensity of his fortune—matters, indeed, (in his pious estimation,) *of the earth*, *earthy*. In vain did the worthy minister strive, every now and then, to divert the current of conversation into a more profitable channel—*i. e.* towards himself; all he said was evidently lost upon her for whose ear it was intended. She was in a revery, and often sighed. The principal figures before her mind's eye were—Tittlebat Titmouse, Esquire, and the Rev. Dismal Horror. The latter was about twenty-six, (he had been "called to the work of the ministry" in his sixteenth year;) short in stature; his face slightly pitted with small-pox; his forehead narrow; his eyes cold and watery; no eyebrows or whiskers; high cheekbones; his short dark hair combed primly forward over each temple, and twisted into a sort of topknot in front; he wore no shirt-collar, but had a white neck-handkerchief tied very formally, and was dressed in an ill-made suit of black. He spoke in a drawling, canting tone; and his countenance was overspread with a demure expression of —CUNNING, *trying to look religious*. Then he was always talking about himself, and his chapel, and the devil, and the bottomless pit, and the number of souls which he had saved, and the number of those whom he knew were damned, and many more who certainly would be damned; and other cheerful and interesting matters of that sort, intrusted—it would seem—to his confidential keeping. All this might be very well in its way, began to think Miss Tag-rag—but it was possible to choke a dog with pudding. Poor girl, can you wonder at her dwelling fondly upon the image of Titmouse? So splendidly dressed, so handsome, such a fashionable air, and with—ten thousand a-year! When she put all these things together, it almost looked like a dream; such good fortune could never be in store for a poor simple girl like herself. Yet there was such a thing as—love at first sight! After tea they all walked down to Mr. Horror's meeting-house. It was very crowded; and it was remarked that the eloquent young preacher had never delivered a more impassioned sermon from that pulpit: it was sublime. Oh, how bitterly he denounced "worldly-mindedness!" What a vivid picture he drew of the flourishing green bay-tree of the wicked, suddenly blasted in the moment of its pride and strength; while the righteous should shine like stars in the firmament forever and ever! Who cannot see here shadowed out the characters of Titmouse and of Horror respectively?—who hesitate between the two? And when at length, the sermon over, he sat down in his pulpit, (the congregation also sitting and singing, which had a somewhat queer effect,) and drew gracefully across his damp forehead his white pocket-handkerchief, which had been given him by Miss Tag-rag; and looked with an air of most interesting languor and exhaustion towards Mr. Tag-rag's pew, where sat that young lamb of his flock—Miss Tag-rag—her father the wealthiest man in the congregation, and she his only child—he felt a most lively and tender interest in her welfare—her spiritual welfare, and resolved to call the next morning; entertaining an humble hope of finding that his zealous labors had not been in vain, that he had not missed the mark at which he had been secretly aiming! Was one fruit of the pious pastor's exertions the benignant temper which Tag-rag, to the amazement of his shopmen, evinced the next morning, for at least an hour? Would that the like good effects had been visible in Mrs. and Miss Tag-rag; but—alas that I should have to record it!—it was so far otherwise, that they laid aside some fancy-fair work on which Mr. Horror had set them—for the whole week, devoting it, instead, to the preparation of those dresses with which they purposed the profanation of the ensuing Sunday.

That day at length arrived, and precisely at six o'clock a genteel fly deposited the visitants from Satin Lodge at the splendid entrance to Alibi House. There was the big footman—shoulder-knot, red breeches, and all. Tag-rag felt a *little* nervous. Before they had entered the gates, the fond proud parents had kissed their trembling daughter, and entreated her "to keep her spirits up!" The exhortation was needful; for when she saw the sort of style that awaited them, she became not a little agitated. When she entered the hall—ah! on a chair lay a glossy new hat, and a delicate ebony walking-stick; so he had come—was then up-stairs!—Miss Tag-rag trembled in every limb.

"I don't know, my dear," whispered Mrs. Tag-rag to her husband, with a subdued sigh, as they followed the splendid footman up-stairs,—"it may be all uncommon grand; but somehow I'm afraid we're doing wrong—it's the Lord's Day—see if any good comes of it."

"Tut—hold your tongue! Let's have no nonsense," sternly whispered Mr. Tag-rag to his submissive wife.

"Your name, sir?" quoth the footman, in a sort of gentlemanly way.

"Mr., Mrs., and Miss Tag-rag," replied Mr. Tag-rag, after clearing his throat; and so they were announced, Miss Quirk coming forward to receive the ladies with the most charming affability. There stood Titmouse, in an easy attitude, with his hands stuck into his coat-pockets, and resting on his hips, in a very delicate and elegant fashion. How completely he seemed at his ease!

"Oh Lord!" thought the almost trembling Tag-rag, "that's the young fellow I used to go on so to!"

In due time dinner was announced; and who can describe the rapture that thrilled through the bosoms of the three Tag-rags, when Mr. Quirk requested Mr. Titmouse to take down—Miss Tag-rag!! Her father took down Mrs. Alias; Mr. Quirk, Mrs. Tag-rag; and Gammon, Miss Quirk. She really might have been proud of her partner. Gammon was about thirty-six years old; above the average height; with a very easy, calm, gentlemanly appearance and address, and an intellectual and even handsome countenance; though it occasionally exhibited, to a keen observer, a sinister expression. He wore a blue coat, a plain white waistcoat, (not disfigured by any glistening fiddle-faddle of pins, chains, or quizzing-glasses,) black trousers, and plain black silk stockings. There was at once an appearance of neatness and carelessness; and there was such a ready smile—such a bland ease and self-possession about him—as communicated itself to those whom he addressed. I hardly know, Mr. Gammon, why I have thus noticed so particularly your outward appearance. It certainly, on the occasion I am describing, struck me much; but there are such things as *whited walls* and *painted sepulchres*!

Dinner went off very pleasantly, the wines soon communicating a little confidence to the flustered guests. Mrs. Tag-rag had drunk so much champagne—an unusual beverage for her—that almost as soon as she had returned to the drawing-room, she sat down on the sofa and fell asleep, leaving the two young ladies to amuse each other as best they might; for Mrs. Alias was very deaf, and moreover very stiff and distant, and sat looking at them in silence. To return to the dining-room for a moment. 'T was quite delightful to see the sort of friendship that seemed to grow up between Quirk and Tag-rag, as their heads got filled with wine; at the same time each of them half unconsciously drawing closer and closer to Titmouse, who sat between them—volubility itself. They soon dropped all disguise—each plainly under the impression that the other could not, or did not, observe him; and at length, impelled by their overmastering motives, they became so barefaced in their sycophancy —evidently forgetting that Gammon was present—that he could several times, with only the utmost difficulty, refrain from bursting into laughter at the earnest devotion with which these two worshippers of the little golden calf strove to attract the attention of their divinity, and recommend themselves to its favor.

At length the four gentlemen repaired to the drawing-room, whence issued the sounds of music; and on entering, they beheld the two lovely performers seated at the piano, engaged upon a duet. The plump flaxen-haired Miss Quirk, in her flowing white muslin dress, her thick gold chain and massive

bracelets, formed rather a strong contrast to her sallow skinny little companion, in a span-new slate-colored silk dress, with staring scarlet sash; her long corkscrew ringlets glistening in bear's grease; and as for their performance, Miss Quirk played boldly and well through her part, a smile of contempt now and then beaming over her countenance at the ridiculous incapacity of her companion. As soon as the gentlemen made their appearance the ladies ceased, and withdrew from the piano, Miss Tag-rag, with a sweet air of simplicity and conscious embarrassment, gliding towards the sofa, where sat her mamma asleep, but whom she at once awoke. Mr. Quirk exclaimed, as evidently elevated with wine, he slapped his daughter on her fat back, "Ah, Dora, my dove!" while Tag-rag kissed his daughter's cheek, and squeezed her hand, and then glanced with a proud and delighted air at Titmouse, who was lolling at full length upon the other sofa, picking his teeth. While Miss Quirk was making tea, Gammon gayly conversing with her, and in an undertone satirizing Miss Tag-rag, the latter young lady was gazing, with a timid air, at the various elegant nick-nacks scattered upon the tables and slabs. One of these consisted of a pretty little box, about a foot square, with a glass lid, through which she saw the contents; and they not a little surprised her. They were pieces of cord; and on looking at one of the sides of the box, she read with a sudden shudder,—"*With these cords were tied the hands of Arthur Grizzlegut, executed for high treason, 1st May 18—. Presented, as a mark of respect, to Caleb Quirk, Esq., by J– K–.*" Poor Miss Tag-rag recoiled from the box as if she had seen it filled with writhing adders. She took an early opportunity, however, of calling her father's attention to it; and he pronounced it a "most inte*rest*ing object," and fetched Mrs. Tag-rag to see it. She agreed, first, with her daughter; and then with her husband. Quietly pushing her investigations, Miss Tag-rag by-and-by beheld a large and splendidly bound volume—in fact, Miss Quirk's album; and, after turning over most of the leaves, and glancing over the "poetical effusions" and "prose sentiments" which few fools can abstain from depositing upon the embossed pages, when solicited by the lovely proprietresses of such works, behold—her heart fluttered—poor Miss Tag-rag almost dropped the magnificent volume; for there was the idolized name of Mr. Titmouse appended to some beautiful poetry—no doubt his own handwriting and composition. She read it over eagerly again and again:—

"Tittlebat Titmouse Is My name,
England Is My Nation,
London Is My Dwelling-Place,
And Christ Is My Salvation."

How exquisite—how touching its simplicity! She looked anxiously about for writing implements! but not seeing any, was at length obliged to trust to her memory; on which, indeed, the remarkable composition was already inscribed in indelible characters. Miss Quirk, who was watching her movements, guessed the true cause of her excitement; and a smile of mingled scorn and pity for her infatuated delusion shone upon her face; in which, however, there appeared a little anxiety when she beheld Titmouse—(she did not perceive that he did so in consequence of a motion from Gammon, whose eye governed his movements as a man's those of his spaniel)—walk up to her, and converse with a great appearance of interest. At length Mr. Tag-rag's "carriage" was announced. Mr. Quirk gave his arm to Mrs. Tag-rag, and Mr. Titmouse to the daughter; who endeavored, as she went down the stairs, to direct melting glances at her handsome and distinguished companion. They evidently *told*, for she could not be mistaken; he certainly once or twice squeezed her arm—and the last fond words he uttered to her were, "'Pon my soul—it's early; devilish sorry your going—hope you've enjoyed yourself!" As the Tag-rags drove home, they were all loud in the praises of those whose splendid hospitality they had been enjoying. Possessing a daughter, for whom Quirk must naturally have wished to make so splendid a match as that with Titmouse—but who was plainly engaged to Mr. Gammon—how kind and disinterested was Mr. Quirk, in affording every encouragement in his power to the passion which Titmouse had so manifestly conceived for Miss Tag-rag! And was there

ever so delightful a person as Gammon? How cordially he had shaken the hands of each of them at parting! As for Miss Tag-rag, she felt that if her heart had not been so deeply engaged to Titmouse, she could have loved Mr. Gammon!

"I hope, Tabby," said Mrs. Tag-rag, with subdued excitement, as they rattled homeward, "that when you're Mrs. Titmouse, you'll bring your dear husband to hear Mr. Horror? You know, we ought to be grateful to the Lord—for He has done it!"

"La, ma, how can I tell?" quoth Miss Tag-rag, petulantly. "I must go where Mr. Titmouse chooses, of course; and no doubt he'll take sittings in one of the West End churches; you know, *you* go where *pa* goes—*I* go where Titmouse goes! But I *will* come sometimes, too—if it's only to show that I'm not above it, you know. La, what a stir there will be! The three Miss Knipps—I do so hope they'll be there! I'll have your pew, ma, lined with red velvet; it will look so genteel."

"I'm not quite so sure, Tabby, though," interrupted her father, with a certain swell of manner, "that we shall, after a certain event, continue to live in these parts. There's such a thing as retiring from business, Tabby; besides, we shall nat'rally wish to be near you!"

"He's a *love* of a man, pa, isn't he?" interrupted Miss Tag-rag, with irrepressible excitement. Her father folded her in his arms. They could hardly believe that they had reached Satin Lodge. That respectable structure, somehow or other, now looked to the eyes of all of them shrunk into most contemptible dimensions; and they quite turned up their noses, involuntarily, on entering the little passage. What was it to the spacious and splendid residence which they had quitted? And what, in all probability, could *that* be to the mansion—or any one, perhaps, of the several mansions—to which Mr. Titmouse would be presently entitled, and—in his right—some one else?

Miss Tag-rag said her prayers that evening very briefly—pausing for an instant to consider, whether she might in plain terms pray that she might soon become Mrs. Titmouse; but the bare thought of such an event so excited her, that in a sort of confused whirl of delightful feeling, she suddenly jumped into bed, and slept scarce a wink all night long. Mr. and Mrs. Tag-rag talked together very fast for nearly a couple of hours, sleep long fleeing from the eyes dazzled with so splendid a vision as that which had floated before them all day. At length Mr. Tag-rag, getting tired sooner than his wife, became very sullen, and silent; and on her venturing—after a few minutes' pause—to mention some new idea which had occurred to her, he told her furiously to "hold her tongue, and let him go to sleep!" She obeyed him, and lay awake till it was broad daylight. About eight o'clock, Tag-rag, who had overslept himself, rudely roused her—imperiously telling her to "go down immediately and see about breakfast;" then he knocked gently at his daughter's door; and on her asking who it was, said in a fond way—"How are you, Mrs. T.?"

CHAPTER IV

While the brilliant success of Tittlebat Titmouse was exciting so great a sensation among the inmates of Satin Lodge and Alibi House, there were also certain quarters in the upper regions of society, in which it produced a considerable commotion, and where it was contemplated with feelings of intense interest; nor without reason. For indeed to you, reflecting reader, much pondering men and manners, and observing the influence of great wealth, especially when suddenly and unexpectedly acquired, upon all classes of mankind—it would appear passing strange that so prodigious an event as that of an accession to a fortune of ten thousand a-year, and a large accumulation of money besides, could be looked on with indifference in those regions where MONEY

"Is like the air they breathe—if they have it not they die;"

in whose absence, all their "honor, love, obedience, troops of friends," disappear like snow under sunshine; the edifice of pomp, luxury, and magnificence that "rose like an exhalation," so disappears—

"And, like an insubstantial pageant faded,
Leaves not a rack behind."

Take away money, and that which raised its delicate and pampered possessors above the common condition of mankind—that of privation and incessant labor and anxiety—into one entirely artificial, engendering totally new wants and desires, is gone, all gone; and its occupants suddenly fall, as it were, through a highly rarefied atmosphere, breathless and dismayed, into contact with the chilling exigencies of life, of which till then they had only heard and read, sometimes with a kind of morbid sympathy; as we hear and read of a foreign country, not stirring the while from our snug homes, by whose comfortable and luxurious firesides we read of the frightful palsying cold of the polar regions, and for a moment sigh over and shudder at the condition of their miserable inhabitants, as vividly pictured to us by adventurous travellers.

If the reader had reverently cast his eye over the pages of that glittering centre of aristocratic literature, and inexhaustible solace against the *ennui* of a wet day—I mean *Debrett's Peerage*, his attention could not have failed to be riveted, among a galaxy of brilliant but minor stars, by the radiance of one transcendent constellation.

Behold; hush; tremble!

"Augustus Mortimer Plantagenet Fitz-Urse, Earl of Dreddlington, Viscount Fitz-Urse, and Baron Drelincourt; Knight of the Golden Fleece; G. C. B., D. C. L., F. C. S., F. P. S., &c., &c., &c.; Lieutenant-General in the army, Colonel of the 37th regiment of light dragoons; Lord Lieutenant of –shire; elder brother of the Trinity House; formerly Lord Steward of the Household; born the 31st of March, 17—; succeeded his father, Percy Constantine Fitz-Urse, as fifth Earl, and twentieth in the Barony, January 10th, 17—; married, April 1, 17—, the Right Hon. Lady Philippa Emmeline Blanche Macspleuchan, daughter of Archibald, ninth Duke of Tantallan, K. T., and has issue an only child,

"Cecilia Philippa Leopoldina Plantagenet, born June 10, 17—.

"Town residence, Grosvenor Square.

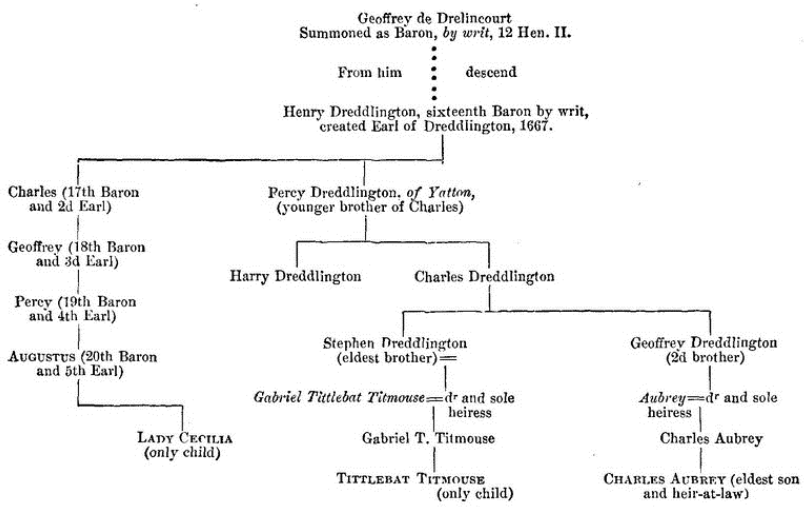
"Seats, Gruneaghoolaghan Castle, Galway; Tre-ardevoraveor Manor, Cornwall; Llmryllwcrwpllglly Abbey, N. Wales; Tully-clachanach Palace, N. Britain; Poppleton Hall, Hertfordshire.

"Earldom, by patent, 1667; – Barony, by writ of summons, 12th Hen. II."

Now, as to the above tremendous list of seats and residences, be it observed that the existence of two of them, viz. Grosvenor Square and Poppleton Hall, was tolerably well ascertained by the residence of the august proprietor of them, and the expenditure therein of his princely revenue of £5,000 a-year. The existence of the remaining ones, however, the names of which the diligent chronicler has preserved with such scrupulous accuracy, had become somewhat problematical since the era of the civil wars, and the physical derangement of the surface of the earth in those parts, which one may conceive to have taken place[11] consequent upon those events; those imposing feudal residences having been originally erected in positions so carefully selected with a view to their security against aggression, as to have become totally inaccessible—and indeed unknown, to the present inglorious and degenerate race, no longer animated by the spirit of chivalry and adventure.

[I have now recovered my breath, after my bold flight into the resplendent regions of aristocracy; but my eyes are still dazzled.]

The reader may by this time have got an intimation that Tittlebat Titmouse, in a madder freak of Fortune than any which her incomprehensible Ladyship hath hitherto exhibited in the pages of this history, is far on his way towards a dizzy pitch of elevation,—viz. that he has now, owing to the verdict of the Yorkshire jury, taken the place of Mr. Aubrey, and become heir-expectant to the oldest barony in the kingdom—between it and him only one old peer, and his sole child, an unmarried daughter, intervening. Behold the thing demonstrated to your very eye, in the Pedigree on the next page, which is only our former one[12] a little extended.



From this I think it will appear, that on the death of Augustus, fifth earl and twentieth baron, with no other issue than Lady Cecilia, the earldom being then extinct, the barony would descend upon the Lady Cecilia; and that, in the event of her dying without issue in the lifetime of her father, Tittlebat Titmouse would, on the earl's death without other lawful issue, become Lord Drelincourt, twenty-*first* in the barony! and in the event of her dying without issue, after her father's death, Tittlebat

[11] Note 11. Page 91.See Dr. Bubble's "Account of the late Landslips, and of the Remains of Subterranean Castles."—Quarto Edition, Vol. III. pp. 2000-2008.

[12] Note 12. Page 91.*Ante*, Vol. 1., p. 441.

Titmouse would become the twenty-*second* Lord Drelincourt; one or other of which two splendid positions, but for the enterprising agency of Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, would have been occupied by Charles Aubrey, Esq.;—on considering all which, one cannot but remember a saying of an ancient poet, who seems to have kept as keen an eye upon the unaccountable frolics of the goddess Fortune, as this history shows that I have. 'Tis a passage which any little schoolboy will translate to his mother or his sisters—

——"Hinc apicem rapax
Fortuna cum stridore acuto
Sustulit, hic posuisse gaudet."[13]

At the time of which I am writing, the Earl of Dreddlington was about sixty-seven years old; and he would have realized the idea of an incarnation of the sublimest PRIDE. He was of rather a slight make, and, though of a tolerably advanced age, stood as straight as an arrow. His hair was glossy, and white as snow: his features were of an aristocratic cast; their expression was severe and haughty; and I am compelled to say that there was scarce a trace of intellect perceptible in them. His manner and demeanor were cold, imperturbable, inaccessible; wherever he went—so to speak—he radiated cold. Comparative poverty had embittered his spirit, as his lofty birth and ancient descent had generated the pride I have spoken of. With what calm and supreme self-satisfaction did he look down upon all lower in the peerage than himself! And as for a newly-created peer, he looked at such a being with ineffable disdain. Among his few equals he was affable enough; and among his inferiors he exhibited an insupportable appearance of condescension—one which excited a wise man's smile of pity and contempt, and a fool's anger—both, however, equally nought to the Earl of Dreddlington!—If any one could have ventured upon a *post mortem* examination of so august a structure as the earl's carcass, his heart would probably have been found to be of the size of a pea, and his brain very soft and flabby; both, however, equal to the small occasions which, from time to time, called for the exercise of their functions. The former was occupied almost exclusively by two feelings—love of himself and of his daughter, (because upon her would descend his barony;) the latter exhibited its powers (supposing the brain to be the seat of the mind) in mastering the military details requisite for nominal soldiership; the game of whist; the routine of petty business in the House of Lords; and the etiquette of the court. One branch of useful knowledge by the way he had, however, completely mastered—that which is so ably condensed in *Debrett*; and he became a sort of oracle in such matters. As for his politics, he professed Whig principles—and was, indeed, a bitter though quiet partisan. In attendance to his senatorial duties, he practised an exemplary punctuality; was always to be found in the House at its sitting and rising; and never once, on any occasion, great or small, voted against his party. He had never been heard to speak in a full House; first, because he never could summon nerve enough for the purpose; secondly, because he never had anything to say; and lastly, lest he should compromise his dignity, and destroy the *prestige* of his position, by not speaking better than any one present. His services were not, however, entirely overlooked; for, on his party coming into office for a few weeks, (they knew it could be for no longer a time,) they made him Lord Steward of the Household; which was thenceforward an epoch to which he referred every event of his life, great and small. The great object of his ambition, ever since he had been of an age to form large and comprehensive views of action and conduct, to conceive superior designs, and to achieve distinction among mankind—was, to obtain a step in the peerage; for considering the antiquity of his family, and his ample, nay, *superfluous* pecuniary means—so much more than adequate to support his present double dignity of earl and baron—he thought it but a reasonable return for his eminent political services, to confer upon him the honor which he coveted. But his anxiety on this point had been recently increased a thousand-fold by

[13] Note 13. Page 93.Horace, Carm. 1. 34, *ad finem.*

one circumstance. A gentleman who held an honorable and lucrative official situation in the House of Lords, and who never had treated the Earl of Dreddlington with that profound obsequiousness which the earl conceived to be his due—but, on the contrary, had presumed to consider himself a man, and an Englishman, equally with the earl—had, a short time before, succeeded in establishing his title to an earldom which had long been dormant, and was, alas, of creation earlier than that of Dreddlington. The Earl of Dreddlington took this untoward circumstance so much to heart, that for some months afterwards he appeared to be in a decline; always experiencing a dreadful inward spasm whenever the Earl of Fitzwalter made his appearance in the House. For this sad state of things there was plainly but one remedy—a Marquisate—at which the earl gazed with the wistful eye of an old and feeble ape at a cocoa-nut, just above his reach, and which he beholds at length grasped and carried off by some nimbler and younger rival.

Among all the weighty cares and anxieties of this life, however, I must do the earl the justice to say, that he did not neglect the concerns of hereafter—the solemn realities of that Future revealed to us in the Scriptures. To his enlightened and comprehensive view of the state of things around him, it was evident that the Author of the world had decreed the existence of regular gradations of society. The following lines, quoted one night in the House by the leader of his party, had infinitely delighted the earl—

"Oh, where DEGREE is shaken,
Which is the ladder to all high designs,
The enterprise is sick!
Take but DEGREE away—untune that string,
And, hark! what discord follows! each thing meets,
In mere oppugnancy!"[14]

When the earl discovered that this was the production of Shakespeare he conceived a great respect for that writer, and purchased a copy of his works, and had them splendidly bound. They were fated never to be opened, however, except at that one place where the famous passage in question was to be found. How great was the honor thus conferred upon the plebeian poet, to stand amid a collection of royal and noble authors, to whose productions, and those in elucidation and praise of them, the earl's splendid-looking library had till then been confined!—Since, thought the earl, such is clearly the order of Providence in this world, why should it not be so in the next? He felt certain that then there would be found corresponding differences and degrees, in analogy to the differences and degrees existing upon earth; and with this view had read and endeavored to comprehend the first page or two of a very dry but learned book—Butler's *Analogy*—lent him by a deceased kinsman—a bishop. This consolatory conclusion of the earl's was greatly strengthened by a passage of Scripture, from which he had once heard the aforesaid bishop preach—"*In my Father's house are* MANY MANSIONS; *if it had not been so, I would have told you*." On grounds such as these, after much conversation with several old brother peers of his own rank, he and they—those wise and good men—came to the conclusion that there was no real ground for apprehending so grievous a misfortune as the huddling together hereafter of the great and small into one miscellaneous and ill-assorted assemblage; but that the rules of precedence, in all their strictness, as being founded in the nature of things, would meet with an exact observance, so that every one should be ultimately and eternally happy—in the company of his equals. The Earl of Dreddlington would have, in fact, as soon supposed, with the deluded Indian, that in his voyage to the next world—

"His faithful dog should bear him company;"

[14] Note 14. Page 96.Troilus and Cressida, i. 3.

as that his Lordship should be doomed to participate the same regions of heaven with any of his domestics; unless, indeed, by some, in his view, not improbable dispensation, it should form an ingredient in their cup of happiness in the next world, there to perform those offices—or analogous ones—for their old masters, which they had performed upon earth. As the earl grew older, these just, and rational, and Scriptural views, became clearer, and his faith firmer. Indeed, it might be said that he was in a manner ripening for immortality—for which his noble and lofty nature, he secretly felt, was fitter, and more likely to be in its element, than it could possibly be in this dull, degraded, and confused world. He knew that there his sufferings in this inferior stage of existence would be richly recompensed,—for sufferings indeed he had, though secret, arising from the scanty means which had been allotted to him for the purpose of maintaining the exalted rank to which it had pleased God to call him. The long series of exquisite mortifications and pinching privations arising from this inadequacy of means, had, however, the earl doubted not, been designed by Providence as a trial of his constancy, and from which he would, in due time, issue like thrice-refined gold. Then also would doubtless be remembered in his favor the innumerable instances of his condescension in mingling, in the most open and courteous manner, with those who were unquestionably his inferiors, sacrificing his own feelings of lofty and fastidious exclusiveness, and endeavoring to advance the interests, and as far as influence and example went, polish and refine the manners of the lower orders of society. Such is an outline—alas, how faint and imperfect!—of the character of this great and good man, the Earl of Dreddlington. As for his domestic and family circumstances, he had been a widower for some fifteen years, his countess having brought him but one child, Lady Cecilia Philippa Leopoldina Plantagenet, who was, in almost all respects, the counterpart of her illustrious father. She resembled him not a little in feature, only that she partook of the plainness of her mother. Her complexion was delicately fair; but her features had no other expression than that of a languid hauteur. Her upper eyelids drooped as if she could hardly keep them open; the upper jaw projected considerably over the under one; and her front teeth were prominent and exposed. Frigid and inanimate, she seemed to take but little interest in anything on earth. In person, she was of average height, of slender and well-proportioned figure, and an erect and graceful carriage, only that she had a habit of throwing her head a little backward, which gave her a singularly disdainful appearance. She had reached her twenty-seventh year without having had an eligible offer of marriage, though she would be the possessor of a barony in her own right, and £5,000 a-year; a circumstance which, it may be believed, not a little embittered her. She inherited her father's pride in all its plenitude. You should have seen the haughty couple sitting silently side by side in the old-fashioned yellow family chariot, as they drove round the crowded park, returning the salutations of those they met in the slightest manner possible! A glimpse of them at such a moment would have given you a far more just and lively notion of their real character, than the most anxious and labored description of mine.

Ever since the first Earl of Dreddlington had, through a bitter pique conceived against his eldest son, the second earl, diverted the principal family revenues to the younger branch, leaving the title to be supported by only £5,000 a-year, there had been a complete estrangement between the elder and the younger—the titled and the moneyed—branches of the family. On Mr. Aubrey's attaining his majority, however, the present earl sanctioned overtures being made towards a reconciliation, being of opinion that Mr. Aubrey and Lady Cecilia might, by intermarriage, effect a happy reunion of family interests; an object, this, which had long lain nearer his heart than any other upon earth, till, in fact, it became a kind of passion. Actuated by such considerations, he had done more to conciliate Mr. Aubrey than he had ever done towards any one on earth. It was, however, in vain. Mr. Aubrey's first delinquency was an unqualified adoption of Tory principles. Now all the Dreddlingtons, from time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, had been firm unflinching Tories, till the distinguished father of the present earl quietly walked over, one day, to the other side of the House of Lords, completely fascinated by a bit of ribbon which the minister held up before him; and ere he had

sat in that wonder-working region, the ministerial side of the House, twenty-four hours, he discovered that the true signification of Tory, was *bigot*—and of Whig, *patriot*; and he stuck to that version till it transformed him into a GOLD STICK, in which capacity he died; having repeatedly and solemnly impressed upon his son, the necessity and advantage of taking the same view of public affairs, that so he might arrive at similar results. And in the *way* in which he had been *trained up*, most religiously had gone the earl; and see the result: he, also, had attained to eminent and responsible office—to wit, that of Lord Steward of the Household. Now, things standing thus—how could the earl so compromise his principles, and indirectly injure his party, as by suffering his daughter to marry a Tory? Great grief and vexation of spirit did *this* matter, therefore, occasion to that excellent nobleman. But, secondly, Aubrey not only declined to marry his cousin, but clinched his refusal, and sealed his final exclusion from the dawning good opinion and affections of the earl, by marrying, as hath been seen, some one else—Miss St. Clair. Thenceforth there was a great gulf between the Earl of Dreddlington and the Aubreys. Whenever they happened to meet, the earl greeted him with an elaborate bow, and a petrifying smile; but for the last seven years not one syllable had passed between them. As for Mr. Aubrey, he had never been otherwise than amused at the eccentric airs of his magnificent kinsman. —Now, was it not a hard thing for the earl to bear—namely, the prospect there was that his barony and estates might devolve upon this same Aubrey, or his issue? for Lady Cecilia, alas! enjoyed but precarious health, and her chances of marrying seemed daily diminishing. This was a thorn in the poor earl's flesh; a source of constant *worry* to him, sleeping and waking; and proud as he was, and with such good reason, he would have gone down on his knees and prayed to Heaven to avert so direful a calamity—to see his daughter married—and with a prospect of perpetuating upon the earth the sublime race of the Dreddlingtons.

Such being the relative position of Mr. Aubrey, and the Earl of Dreddlington, at the time when this history opens, it is easy for the reader to imagine the lively interest with which the earl first heard of the tidings that a stranger had set up a title to the whole of the Yatton estates; and the silent but profound anxiety with which he continued to regard the progress of the affair. He obtained, from time to time, by means of confidential inquiries instituted by his solicitor, a general notion of the nature of the new claimant's pretensions; but with a due degree of delicacy towards his unfortunate kinsman, his Lordship studiously concealed the interest he felt in so important a family question as the succession to the Yatton property. The earl and his daughter were exceedingly anxious to *see* the claimant; and when he heard that that claimant was a gentleman of "decided Whig principles"—the earl was very near setting it down as a sort of special interference of Providence in his favor; and one that, in the natural order of things, would lead to the accomplishment of his other wishes. Who could say that, before a twelvemonth had passed over, the two branches of the family might not be in a fair way of being reunited? And that thus, among other incidents, the earl would be invested with the virtual patronage of the borough of Yatton, and, in the event of their return to power, his claim upon his party for his long-coveted marquisate rendered irresistible? He had gone to the Continent shortly before the trial of the ejectment at York; and did not return till a day or two after the Court of King's Bench had solemnly declared the validity of the plaintiff's title to the Yatton property, and consequently established his contingent right of succession to the barony of Drelincourt. Of this event a lengthened account was given in one of the Yorkshire papers which fell under the earl's eye the day after his arrival from abroad; and to the report of the decision of the question of law, was appended the following paragraph:—

> "In consequence of the above decision, Mr. Aubrey, we are able to state on the best authority, has given formal notice of his intention to surrender the entire of the Yatton property without further litigation; thus making the promptest amends in his power to those whom he has—we cannot doubt unwittingly—injured. He has also accepted the Chiltern Hundreds, and has consequently retired from Parliament; so that the borough of Yatton is now vacant. We sincerely hope that the new proprietor

> of Yatton will either himself sit for the borough, and announce immediately his intention of doing so, or give his prompt and decisive support to some gentleman of decided Whig principles. We say *prompt*—for the enemy is vigilant and crafty. Men of Yatton! To the rescue!!!—Mr. Titmouse is now, we believe, in London. This fortunate gentleman is not only at this moment in possession of the fine property at Yatton, with an unencumbered rent-roll of from twelve to fifteen thousand a-year, and a vast accumulation of rents to be handed over by the late possessor, but is now next but one in succession to the earldom of Dreddlington and barony of Drelincourt, with the large family estates annexed thereto. We believe this is the oldest barony in the kingdom. It must be a source of great gratification to the present earl, to know that his probable successor professes the same liberal and enlightened political opinions, of which his Lordship has, during his long and distinguished public life, been so able, consistent, and uncompromising a supporter."

The Earl of Dreddlington was not a little flustered on seeing the above paragraph; which he read over half a dozen times with increasing excitement. The time had at length arrived for him to take decisive steps; nay, duty to his newly-discovered kinsman required it.

Messrs. Titmouse and Gammon were walking arm-in-arm down Oxford Street, on their return from some livery-stables, where they had been looking at a horse which Titmouse was thinking of purchasing, when an incident occurred which ruffled him not a little. He had been recognized and publicly accosted by a vulgar fellow, with a yard-measure in his hand, and a large parcel of drapery under his arm—in fact, by our old friend Mr. Huckaback. In vain did Mr. Titmouse affect, for some time, not to see his old acquaintance, and to be earnestly engaged in conversation with Mr. Gammon.

"Ah, Titty!—Titmouse! Well, then—*Mister* Titmouse—how are you?—Devilish long time since we met!" Titmouse directed a look at him which he wished could have blighted him, and quickened his pace without taking any further notice of the presumptuous intruder. Huckaback's blood was up, however—roused by this ungrateful and insolent treatment from one who had been under such great obligations to him; and quickening *his* pace also, he kept alongside with Titmouse.

"Ah," continued Huckaback, "why do you cut me in this way, Titty? You *aren't* ashamed of me surely? Many's the time you've tramped up and down Oxford Street with your bundle and yard-measure"–

"Fellow!" at length exclaimed Titmouse, indignantly, "'pon my life I'll give you in charge if you go on so! Be off, you low fellow!—Dem vulgar brute!" he subjoined in a lower tone, bursting into perspiration, for he had not forgotten the insolent pertinacity of Huckaback's disposition.

"My eyes! Give me in charge? Come, I like that, rather—you vagabond! Pay me what you owe me! You're a swindler! You owe me fifty pounds, you do! You sent a man to rob me!"

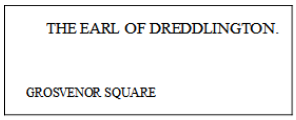
"Will any one get a constable!" inquired Titmouse, who had grown as white as death. The little crowd that was collecting round them began to suspect, from Titmouse's agitated appearance, that there must be some foundation for the charges made against him.

"Oh, go, get a constable! Nothing I should like better! Ah, my fine gentleman—what's the time of day when chaps like you are wound up so high?"

Gammon's interference was in vain. Huckaback got more abusive and noisy; no constable was at hand; so, to escape the intolerable interruption and nuisance, he beckoned a coach off the stand, which was close by; and, Titmouse and he stepping into it, they were soon out of sight and hearing of Mr. Huckaback. Having taken a shilling drive, they alighted, and walked towards Covent Garden. As they approached the hotel, they observed a yellow chariot, at once elegant and somewhat old-fashioned, rolling away from the door.

"I wonder who that is," said Gammon; "it's an earl's coronet on the panel; and a white-haired old gentleman was sitting low down in the corner"–

"Ah—it's no doubt a fine thing to be a lord, and all that—but I'll answer for it, some of 'em's as poor as a church mouse," replied Titmouse as they entered the hotel. At that moment the waiter, with a most profound bow, presented him with a letter and a card, which had only the moment before been left for him. The card was thus:



and there was written on it, in pencil, in rather a feeble and hurried character—"For Mr. Titmouse."

"My stars, Mr. Gammon!" exclaimed Titmouse, excitedly, addressing Mr. Gammon, who also seemed greatly interested by the occurrence. They both repaired to a vacant table at the extremity of the room; and Titmouse, with not a little trepidation, hastily breaking a large seal which bore the earl's family arms, with their crowded quarterings and grim supporters—better appreciated by Gammon, however, than by Titmouse—opened the ample envelope, and, unfolding its thick gilt-edged enclosure, read as follows:—

> "The Earl of Dreddlington has the honor of waiting upon Mr. Titmouse, in whom he is very happy to have, though unexpectedly, discovered so near a kinsman. On the event which has brought this to pass, the earl congratulates himself not less than Mr. Titmouse, and hopes for the earliest opportunity of a personal introduction.
>
> "The earl leaves town to-day and will not return till Monday next, on which day he begs the honor of Mr. Titmouse's company to dinner, at six o'clock. He may depend upon its being strictly a family *reunion*; the only person present, besides Mr. Titmouse and the earl, being the Lady Cecilia.
>
> "Grosvenor Square, Thursday.
>
> "Tittlebat Titmouse, Esq., &c. &c."

As soon as Titmouse had read the above, still holding it in his hand, he gazed at Gammon with mute apprehension and delight. Of the existence, indeed, of the magnificent personage who had just introduced himself, Titmouse had certainly heard, from time to time, since the commencement of the proceedings which had just been so successfully terminated. He had seen the brightness, to be sure; but, as a sort of remote splendor, like that of a fixed star which gleamed brightly, but at too vast a distance to have any sensible influence, or even to arrest his attention. After a little while, Titmouse began to chatter very volubly; but Gammon, after reading over the note once or twice, seemed not much inclined for conversation: and, had Titmouse been accustomed to observation, he might have gathered, from the eye and brow of Gammon, that that gentleman's mind was very deeply occupied by some matter or other, probably suggested by the incident which had just taken place. Titmouse, by-and-by, called for pens, ink, and paper—"the very best gilt-edged paper, mind"—and prepared to reply to Lord Dreddlington's invitation. Gammon, however, who knew the peculiarities of his friend's style of correspondence, suggested that *he* should draw up, and Titmouse copy the following note. This was presently done; but when Gammon observed how thickly studded it was with capital letters, the numerous flourishes with which it was garnished, and its more than questionable orthography, he prevailed on Titmouse, after some little difficulty, to allow him to transcribe the note which was to be sent to Lord Dreddlington. Here is a copy of that courteous document:—

> "Mr. Titmouse begs to present his compliments to the Earl of Dreddlington, and to express the high sense he entertains of the kind consideration evinced by his Lordship in his call and note of to-day.

"One of the most gratifying circumstances connected with Mr. Titmouse's recent success, is the distinguished alliance which his Lordship has been so prompt and courteous in recognizing. Mr. Titmouse will feel the greatest pleasure in availing himself of the Earl of Dreddlington's invitation to dinner for Monday next.

"Cabbage-Stalk Hotel, Thursday.

"The Right Honble. the Earl of Dreddlington, &c., &c."

"Have you a 'Peerage' here, waiter?" inquired Gammon, as the waiter brought him a lighted taper. *Debrett* was shortly laid before him; and turning to the name of Dreddlington, he read over the paragraph which had been already laid before the reader. "Humph—*'Lady Cecilia'*—here she is—his *daughter*—I thought as much—I see!" This was what passed through his mind, as—having left Titmouse, who set off to deposit a card and the above "Answer" at Lord Dreddlington's—he made his way towards the delectable regions in which their office was situated—Saffron Hill. "'Tis curious—amusing—interesting, to observe the social progress of this charming little fellow"—continued Gammon to himself—

"*Tag-rag*—and his daughter;

"*Quirk*—and his daughter;

"*The Earl of Dreddlington*—and his daughter. How many more? Happy! happy! happy Titmouse!"

The sun which was rising upon Titmouse was setting upon the Aubreys. Dear, delightful—now too dear, now too delightful—Yatton! the shades of evening are descending upon thee, and thy virtuous but afflicted occupants, who, early on the morrow, quit thee forever. Approach silently you conservatory. Behold, in the midst of it, the dark slight figure of a lady, solitary, motionless, in melancholy attitude—her hands clasped before her: it is Miss Aubrey. Her face is beautiful, but grief is in her eye; and her bosom heaves with sighs, which, gentle though they be, are yet the only sounds audible. Yes, that is the sweet and once joyous Kate Aubrey!

'Twas she indeed; and this was her last visit to her conservatory. Many rare, delicate, and beautiful flowers were there. The air was laden with the fragrant odors which they exhaled, as it were in sighs, on account of the dreaded departure of their lovely mistress. At length she stooped down, and, in stooping, a tear fell right upon the small sprig of geranium which she gently detached from its stem, and placed in her bosom. "Sweet flowers," thought she, "who will tend you as I have tended you, when I am gone? Why do you look now more beautiful than ever you did before?"—Her eye presently fell upon the spot on which, till the day before, had stood her aviary. Poor Kate had sent it, as a present, to Lady De la Zouch, and it was then at Fotheringham Castle. What a flutter there used to be among the beautiful little creatures, when they perceived Kate's approach! She turned her head away. She felt oppressed, and attributed it to the closeness of the conservatory—the strength of the odors given out by the numerous flowers; but it was sorrow that oppressed her; and she was in a state at once of mental excitement and physical exhaustion. The last few weeks had been an interval of exquisite suffering. She could not be happy alone, nor yet bear the company of her brother and sister-in-law, or their innocent and lovely children. Quitting the conservatory with a look of lingering fondness, she passed along into the house with a hurried step, and escaped, unobserved, to her chamber—the very chamber in which the reader obtained his first distant and shadowy glimpse of her; and in which, now entering it silently and suddenly, the door being only closed, not shut, she observed her faithful little maid Harriet, sitting in tears before a melancholy heap of packages prepared for travelling on the morrow. She rose as Miss Aubrey entered, and presently exclaimed passionately, bursting afresh into tears, "Ma'am, I *can't* leave you—indeed I can't! I know all your ways; I won't go to any one else! I shall hate service! and I know they'll hate *me* too; for I shall cry myself to death!"

"Come, come, Harriet," faltered Miss Aubrey, "this is very foolish; nay, it is unkind to distress me in this manner at the last moment."

"Oh, ma'am, if you *did* but know how I love you! How I'd go on my knees to serve you all the rest of the days of my life!"

"Don't talk in that way, Harriet; that's a good girl," said Miss Aubrey, rather faintly, and, sinking into the chair, she buried her face in her handkerchief, "you know I've had a great deal to go through, Harriet, and am in very poor spirits."

"I know it, ma'am, I do; and that's why I can't *bear* to leave you!" She sank on her knees beside Miss Aubrey. "Oh, ma'am, if you would but let me stay with you! I've been trying, ever since you first told me, to make up my mind to part with you, and, now it's coming to the time, I *can't*, ma'am —indeed, I can't! If you did but know, ma'am, what my thoughts have been, while I've been folding and packing up your dresses here! To think that I sha'n't be with you to unpack them! It's very hard, ma'am, that Madam's maid is to go with her, and I'm not to go with *you*!"

"We were obliged to make a choice, Harriet," said Miss Aubrey, with forced calmness.

"Yes, ma'am; but why didn't you choose us both? Because we've both always done our best; and, as for me, you've never spoke an unkind word to me in your life"–

"Harriet, Harriet," said Miss Aubrey, tremulously, "I've several times explained to you that we cannot any longer afford each to have our own maid; and Mrs. Aubrey's maid is older than you, and knows how to manage children"–

"What signifies *affording*, ma'am? Neither she nor I will ever take a shilling of wages; I'd really rather serve you for nothing, ma'am, than any other lady for a hundred pounds a-year! Oh, so happy as I've been in your service, ma'am!" she added hastily, and burst into an agony of weeping.

"Don't, Harriet!—You would not, if you knew the pain you give me," said Miss Aubrey, faintly. Harriet perceived Miss Aubrey's ill-concealed agitation; and starting aside, poured out a glass of water, and forced her pale mistress to swallow a little, which presently revived her.

"Harriet," said she, feebly, but firmly, "you have never once disobeyed me, and *now* I am certain that you will not. I assure you that we have made all our arrangements, and cannot alter them. I have been very fortunate in obtaining for you so kind a mistress as Lady Stratton. Remember, Harriet, she was the oldest bosom friend of my"–Miss Aubrey's voice trembled, and she ceased speaking for a minute or two, during which she struggled against her feelings with momentary success. "Here's the prayer-book," she presently resumed, opening a drawer in her dressing-table, and taking out a small volume—"Here's the prayer-book I promised you; it is very prettily bound, and I have written your name in it, Harriet, as you desired. Take it, and keep it for my sake. Will you?"

"Oh, ma'am," replied the girl, bitterly, "I shall never bear to look at it! And yet I'll never part with it till I die!"

"Now leave me, Harriet, for a short time—I wish to be alone," said Miss Aubrey; and she was obeyed. She presently rose and bolted the door; and then, secure from interruption, walked slowly to and fro for some time; and a long and deep current of melancholy thoughts and feelings flowed through her mind and heart. She had but a short time before seen her sister's sweet children put into their little beds for the last time at Yatton; and together with their mother, had hung fondly over them, kissing and embracing them—their destined little fellow-wanderers—till her feelings compelled her to leave them. One by one, all the dear innumerable ties which had attached her to Yatton, and to everything connected with it, ever since her birth, had been severed and broken—ties, not only the strength, but very existence of which, she had scarce been aware of, till then. She had bade—as had all of them—repeated and agonizing farewells to very dear and old friends. Her heart trembled as she gazed at the objects familiar to her eye, and pregnant with innumerable little softening associations, ever since her infancy. Nothing around them now belonged to *them*—but to a stranger—to one who —she shuddered with disgust. She thought of the fearful position in which her brother was placed —entirely at the mercy of, it might be, selfish and rapacious men—what indeed was to become of all of them? At length she threw herself into the large old easy-chair which stood near the window, and with a fluttering heart and hasty tremulous hand, drew an open letter from her bosom. She held

it for some moments, as if dreading again to peruse it—but at length unfolded and read a portion of it. 'Twas full of fervent and at the same time delicate expressions of fondness; and after a short while, her hand dropped, with the letter, upon her lap, and she burst into a passionate flood of tears. After an interval of several minutes, she again took up the letter—read a little farther—still more and more moved by the generous and noble sentiments it contained—and at length, utterly overcome, she again dropped her hand, and sobbed aloud long and vehemently. "It cannot—cannot—no, it *cannot* be," she murmured; and, yielding to her feelings for a long while, her tears showered down her pallid, beautiful cheeks.

At length, having resumed her perusal of the letter, she came to the conclusion. In a kind of agony she pressed the signature to her lips; and then hastily folding up the letter, replaced it whence she had taken it, and continued sobbing bitterly. Alas, what additional poignancy did this give to the agonies of her last evening at Yatton! She had, however, become somewhat calmer by the time that she heard the door hastily, but gently tapped at, and then attempted to be opened. Miss Aubrey rose and unbolted it, and Mrs. Aubrey entered, her beautiful countenance as pale and sad as that of her sister-in-law. The former, however, was both wife and mother; and the various cares which these relations had entailed upon her, at a bitter moment like the present, served in some measure to occupy her thoughts, and prevent her from being absorbed by the heart-breaking circumstances which surrounded her. Suffering had, however, a little impaired her beauty; her cheek was very pale, and her eye and brow were laden with trouble.

"Kate, dear Kate," said she, rather quickly, closing the door after her, "what is to be done? Did you hear carriage-wheels a few moments ago? Who do you think have arrived? As I fancied would be the case, the De la Zouches!" Miss Aubrey trembled and turned pale. "You must see—you *must* see—Lady De la Zouch, Kate—they have driven from Fotheringham on purpose to take—*once more*—a last farewell! 'Tis very painful, but what can be done? You know what dear, dear, good friends they are!"

"Is Lord De la Zouch come, also?" inquired Miss Aubrey, apprehensively.

"I will not deceive you, dearest Kate, they are *all* come; but *she*, only, is in the house: they are gone out to look for Charles, who is walking in the park." Miss Aubrey trembled violently; and after evidently a severe struggle with her feelings, the color having entirely deserted her face, and left it of an ashy whiteness, "I cannot muster up resolution enough, Agnes," she whispered. "I know their errand!"

"Care not about their errand, love!" said Mrs. Aubrey, embracing her fondly. "You shall not be troubled—you shall not be persecuted." Miss Aubrey shook her head, and grasped Mrs. Aubrey's hand.

"They do not, Agnes, they *cannot* persecute me," replied Miss Aubrey, with energy. "It is a cruel and harsh word to use—and!—consider how noble, how disinterested is their conduct; *that* it is which subdues me!"

Mrs. Aubrey embraced still more closely her agitated sister-in-law, and tenderly kissed her forehead.

"Oh, Agnes!" faltered Miss Aubrey, pressing her hand upon her heart to relieve the intolerable oppression which she suffered—"would to Heaven that I had never seen—never thought of him!"

"Don't fear, Kate! that he will attempt to see you on so sad an occasion as this. Delamere is a man of infinite delicacy and generosity!"

"I know he is—I know he is," gasped Miss Aubrey, almost suffocated with her emotions.

"Stay, I'll tell you what to do; I'll go down and return with Lady De la Zouch: we can see her here, undisturbed and alone, for a few moments; and then, nothing painful *can* occur. Shall I bring her?" she inquired, rising. Miss Aubrey did not dissent; and, within a very few minutes' time, Mrs. Aubrey returned, accompanied by Lady De la Zouch. She was rather an elderly woman. Her countenance was still handsome; and she possessed a very dignified carriage. She was of an extremely

affectionate disposition, and passionately fond of Miss Aubrey. Hastily drawing aside her veil as she entered the room, she stepped quickly up to Miss Aubrey, kissed her, and grasped her hands, for some moments, in silence.

"This is very sad work, Miss Aubrey," said she at length, hurriedly glancing at the luggage lying piled up at the other end of the room. Miss Aubrey made no answer, but shook her head. "It was useless attempting it, dear Kate—we *could* not stay at home; we have risked being charged with cruel intrusion; forgive me, dearest, will you? *They*," said Lady De la Zouch, pointedly, "will not come near you!" Miss Aubrey trembled. "I feel as if I were parting with an only daughter, Kate," said Lady De la Zouch, with sudden emotion. "How your mamma and I loved one another!" said she, fondly, and burst into tears.

"For mercy's sake, open the window; I feel suffocated," faltered Miss Aubrey. Mrs. Aubrey hastily drew up the window, and the cool refreshing breeze of evening quickly diffused itself through the apartment, and revived the drooping spirits of Miss Aubrey, who walked gently to and fro about the room, supported by Lady De la Zouch and Mrs. Aubrey, and soon recovered a tolerable degree of composure. The three ladies presently stood, arm-in-arm, gazing through the deep bay-window at the fine prospect which it commanded. The gloom of evening was beginning to steal over the landscape.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Miss Aubrey, faintly, with a deep sigh.

"The window in the northern tower of the Castle commands a still more extensive view," said Lady De la Zouch, looking earnestly at Miss Aubrey, who, as if conscious of some agitating allusion, burst into tears. After standing gazing through the window for some time longer, they stepped back into the room, and were soon engaged in deep and earnest conversation.

For the last three weeks Mr. Aubrey had addressed himself with calmness and energy to the painful duties which had devolved upon him, of *setting his house in order*. Immediately after quitting the dinner-table that day—a mere nominal meal to all of them—he had retired to the library, to complete the extensive and important arrangements consequent upon his abandonment of Yatton; and after about an hour thus occupied, he went forth to take a solitary walk—a melancholy—a last walk about the property. It was a moment which severely tried his fortitude; but that fortitude stood the trial. He was a man of lively sensibilities, and appreciated, to its utmost extent, the melancholy and alarming change which had come over his fortunes. Surely even the bluntest and coarsest feelings which ever tried to disguise and dignify themselves under the name of STOICISM—to convert into bravery, and fortitude, a stupid, sullen insensibility—must have been not a little shaken by such scenes as Mr. Aubrey had had to pass through during the last few weeks—scenes which I do not choose to distress the reader's feelings by dwelling upon in detail. Mr. Aubrey had no mean pretensions to real philosophy; but he had still juster pretensions to an infinitely higher character,—that of a Christian. He had a firm unwavering conviction that whatever befell him, either of good or evil, was by the ordination of the Almighty—infinitely Wise, infinitely Good;—and this was the source of his fortitude and resignation. He felt himself here standing upon ground which was immovable.

To avert the misfortune which menaced him, he had neglected no rational and *conscientious* means. To retain the advantages of fortune and station to which he had believed himself born, he had made the most strenuous exertions consistent with a rigid sense of honor. What, indeed, *could* he have done, that he *had* not done? He had caused the claims of his opponent to be subjected to as severe a scrutiny as the wit of man could suggest; *and they had stood the test*. Those claims, and his own, had been each of them placed in the scales of justice; those scales had been held up and poised by the pure and firm hands to which the laws of God, and of the country, had committed the administration of justice: on what ground could a just and reasonable man quarrel with or repine at the issue? And supposing that a perverse and subtle ingenuity in his legal advisers could have devised means for delaying his surrender of the property to the individual who had been solemnly declared its true owner, what real and ultimate advantage could have been obtained by such a dishonorable line of conduct? Could the spirit of the Christian religion tolerate the bare idea of it? Could such purposes

or intentions consist for one instant with the consciousness that the awful eye of God was always upon every thought of his mind, every feeling of his heart, every purpose of his will? A thorough and lively conviction of God's moral government of the world secured Aubrey a happy composure—a glorious and immovable resolution. It enabled him to form a true estimate of things; it extracted the sting from grief and regret; it dispelled the gloom which would otherwise have settled portentously upon the future. Thus he had not *forgotten the exhortation which spoke unto him, as unto a child: My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him*. And if, indeed, religion had not done this for Mr. Aubrey, what *could* it have done, what would it have been worth? It would indeed have been that which dull fools suppose it—a mere name, a melancholy delusion. What hopeless and lamentable imbecility would it not have argued, to have acknowledged the reality and influence of religion in the hour of prosperity—and to have doubted, distrusted, or denied it in the hour of adversity? When a child beholds the sun obscured by dark clouds, he may think in his simplicity that it is gone forever; but a MAN knows that behind is the sun, magnificent as ever; and that the next moment, the clouds having rolled away, its glorious warmth and light are again upon the earth. Thus is it, thought Aubrey with humble but cheerful confidence, with the Almighty—who hath declared himself *the Father of the spirits of all flesh*—

"Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face!
Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His works in vain!
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain!"

"Therefore, O my God!" thought Aubrey, as he gazed upon the lovely scenes familiar to him from his birth, and from which a few short hours were to separate him forever, "I do acknowledge Thy hand in what has befallen me, and Thy mercy which enables me to bear it, as from Thee." The scene around him was tranquil and beautiful—inexpressibly beautiful. He stood under the shadow of a mighty elm-tree, the last of a long and noble avenue, which he had been pacing in deep thought for upwards of an hour. The ground was considerably elevated above the level of the rest of the park. No sound disturbed the serene repose of the approaching evening, except the distant and gradually diminishing sounds issuing from an old rookery, and the faint low bubbling of a clear streamlet which flowed not far from where he stood. Here and there, under the deepening shadows cast by the lofty trees, might be seen the glancing forms of deer, the only live things visible. "Life," said Aubrey, to himself, with a sigh, as he leaned against the trunk of the grand old tree under which he stood, and gazed with a fond and mournful eye on the lovely scenes stretching before him, to which the subdued radiance of the departing sunlight communicated a tone of tender pensiveness; "life is, in truth, what the Scripture—what the voice of nature—represents it—a long journey, during which the traveller stops at many resting places. Some of them are more, others less beautiful; from some he parts with more, from others with less regret; but *part he must*, and pursue his journey, though he may often turn back to gaze with lingering fondness and admiration at the scene which he has last quitted. The next stage may be—*as all his journey might have been*—bleak and desolate; but, through *that* he is only passing: he will not be condemned to stay in it, as he was not permitted to dwell in the other; he is still journeying on, along a route which he cannot mistake, to the point of his destination, his journey's end—the shores of the vast, immeasurable, boundless ocean of eternity—HIS HOME!"

The deepening shadows of evening warned him to retrace his steps to the Hall. Before quitting the spot upon which he had been so long standing, he turned his head a little towards the right, to take a last view of an object which called forth tender and painful feeling—it was the old sycamore which his sister's intercession had saved from the axe. There it stood, feeble and venerable object! its leafless

silvery-gray branches becoming in the fading light, dim and indistinct, yet contrasting touchingly with the verdant strength of those near it. A neat strong fence had been placed around it; but how much longer would it receive such care and attention? Aubrey thought of the comparison which had on a former occasion been made by his sister; and sighed heavily as he looked his last at the old tree. Then he slowly walked on towards the Hall. When about halfway down the avenue, he beheld two figures apparently approaching him, but undistinguishable in the gloom and the distance. As they neared him, he recognized Lord De la Zouch, and Mr. Delamere. Suspecting the object of their visit, which a little surprised him, since they had taken a final leave, and a very affecting one, the day before, he felt a little anxiety and embarrassment. Nor was he entirely mistaken. Lord De la Zouch, who advanced alone towards Aubrey—Mr. Delamere turning back—most seriously pressed his son's suit for the hand of Miss Aubrey, as he had often done before; declaring, that though undoubtedly he wished a year or two first to elapse, during which his son might complete his studies at Oxford, there was no object dearer to the heart of Lady De la Zouch and himself, than to see Miss Aubrey become their daughter-in-law. "Where," said Lord De la Zouch, with much energy, "is he to look elsewhere for such an union of beauty, of accomplishments, of amiability, of high-mindedness?" After a great deal of animated conversation on this subject, during which Mr. Aubrey assured Lord De la Zouch that *he* would say everything which he honorably could to induce his sister to entertain, or at all events, not to discard the suit of Delamere; at the same time reminding him of the firmness of her character, and the hopelessness of attempting to change any determination to which she might have been led by her sense of delicacy and honor,—Lord De la Zouch addressed himself in a very earnest manner to matters more immediately relating to the personal interests of Mr. Aubrey; entered with lively anxiety into all his future plans and purposes; and once more pressed upon him the acceptance of most munificent offers of pecuniary assistance, which, with many fervent expressions of gratitude, Aubrey again declined. But he pledged himself to communicate freely with Lord De la Zouch, in the event of an occasion arising for such assistance as his Lordship had already so generously volunteered. By this time Mr. Delamere had joined them, regarding Mr. Aubrey with infinite earnestness and apprehension. All, however, he said, was—and in a hurried manner to his father—"My mother is waiting for you in the carriage, and wishes that we should immediately return." Lord De la Zouch and his son again took leave of Mr. Aubrey. "Remember, my dear Aubrey, remember the pledges you have repeated this evening," said the former. "I do, I will!" replied Mr. Aubrey, as they each wrung his hands; and then, having grasped those of Lady De la Zouch, who sat within the carriage powerfully affected, the door was shut; and they were quickly borne away from the presence and the residence of their afflicted friends. While Mr. Aubrey stood gazing after them, with folded arms, in an attitude of melancholy abstraction, at the Hall door, he was accosted by Dr. Tatham, who had come to him from the library, where he had been, till a short time before, busily engaged reducing into writing various matters which had been the subject of conversation between himself and Mr. Aubrey during the day.

"I am afraid, my dear friend," said the doctor, "that there is a painful but interesting scene awaiting you. You will not, I am sure, forbear to gratify, by your momentary presence in the servants' hall, a body of your tenantry, who are there assembled, having come to pay you—good souls!—their parting respects."

"I would really rather be spared the painful scene," said Mr. Aubrey, with emotion. "I am nearly unnerved as it is! Cannot you bid them adieu, in my name? and say God bless them!"

"You *must* come, my dear friend! If it *be* painful, it will be but for a moment; and the recollection of their hearty and humble expressions of affection and respect will be pleasant hereafter. Poor souls!" he added with not a little emotion, "you should see how crowded is Mr. Griffiths' room with the presents they have each brought you, and which would surely keep your whole establishment for months!—Cheeses, tongues, hams, bacon, and I know not what beside!"

"Come, Doctor," said Mr. Aubrey, quickly, and with evidently a great effort, "I will see them, my humble and worthy friends! if it *be* but for a moment; but I would rather have been spared the

scene." He followed Dr. Tatham into the spacious servants' hall, which he found nearly filled by some forty or fifty of his late tenantry, who, as he entered, rose in troubled silence to receive him. There were lights, by which a hurried glance sufficed to show him the deep sorrow visible in their countenances. "Well, sir," commenced one of them, after a moment's hesitation—he seemed to have been chosen the spokesman of those present—"we've come to tak' our leave; and a sad time it be for all of us, and it may be, sir, for you." He paused, and added abruptly—"I thought I could have said a word or two, sir, in the name of all of us, but I've clean forgotten all; and I wish we could all forget that we were come to part with you, sir;—but we sha'n't—no, never!—we shall never see your like again, sir! God help you, sir!" Again he paused, and struggled hard to conceal his emotions. Then he tried to say something further, but his voice failed him.

"Squire, it may be law; but it be not justice, we all do think, that hath taken Yatton from you, that was born to it," said one, who stood next to him who had first spoken. "Who ever heard o' a scratch in a bit of paper signifying the loss o' so much? It never were heard of afore, sir, an' cannot be right!"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.