

JULIUS VOGEL

ANNO DOMINI 2000;
OR, WOMAN'S DESTINY

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Julius Vogel
Anno Domini 2000;
or, Woman's Destiny

Dedicated

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL OF CARNARVON,

**WHO, BY HIS SUCCESSFUL
EFFORTS TO CONSOLIDATE**

THE CANADIAN DOMINIONS, HAS

GREATLY AIDED THE CAUSE

OF FEDERATION

PROLOGUE.

A.D. 1920

George Claude Sonsius in his early youth appeared to have before him a fair, prosperous future. His father and mother were of good family, but neither of them inherited wealth. When young Sonsius finished his university career, the small fortune which his father possessed was swept away by the failure of a large banking company. All that remained from the wreck was a trifling annuity payable during the lives of his father and mother, and this they did not live long to enjoy. They died within a year of each other, but they had been able to obtain for their son a fairly good position in a large mercantile house as foreign correspondent. At twenty-five the young man married; and three years afterwards he unfortunately met with a serious accident, that made him for two years a helpless invalid and at the end of the time left him with his right hand incapable of use. Meanwhile his appointment had lapsed, his wife's small fortune had disappeared, and during several years his existence had been one continual struggle with ever-increasing want and penury. The end was approaching. The father and mother and their one crippled son, twelve years old, dwelt in the miserable attic of a most dilapidated house in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of London. The roof over their heads did not even protect them

from the weather. The room was denuded of every article of furniture with the exception of two worthless wooden cases and a horsehair mattress on which the unhappy boy stretched his pain-wrung limbs.

Early in life this child suffered only from weakness of the spine, but his parents could afford no prolonged remedial measures. Not that they were unkind to him. On the contrary, they devoted to him every minute they could spare, and lavished on him all the attention that affection comparatively powerless from want of means could dictate. But the food they were able to give him was scant instead of, as his condition demanded, varied and nutritious. At length chronic disease of the spine set in, and his life became one long misery.

Parochial aid was refused unless they would go into the poor-house, but the one thing Mrs. Sonsius could not bring herself to endure was the separation from her son which was demanded of her as a condition of relief.

For thirty hours they had been without food, when the father, maddened by the moanings of his wife and child, rushed into the street, and passing a baker's shop which appeared to be empty, stole from it a loaf of bread. The proprietor, however, saw the action from an inner room. He caught Sonsius just as he was leaving the shop. He did not care to give the thief in charge, necessitating as it would several attendances at the police court. He took the administration of justice into his own hands, and dealt the unhappy man two severe blows in the face. To a

healthy person the punishment would have done comparatively little harm, but Sonsius was weakened by disease and starvation, and the shock of the blows was too much for him. He fell prone on the pavement, and all attempts to restore him to consciousness proved unavailing.

Then his history became public property. Scores of people remembered the pleasant-mannered, well-looking young man who had distinguished himself at college, and for whom life seemed to promise a pleasant journey. The horrible condition of his wife and child, the desperation that drove him to the one lapse from an otherwise stainless life, the frightful contrast between the hidden poverty and the gorgeous wealth of the great metropolis, became themes upon which every newspaper dilated after its own fashion. Some papers even went so far as to ask, "Was it a crime for a man to steal a loaf of bread to save his wife and child from starvation?"

In grim contrast with the terrible conclusion of his wretched career, the publicity cast upon it elicited the fact that a few weeks earlier he had inherited by the death of a distant relative an enormous fortune, all efforts to trace him through the changes of residence that increasing poverty had necessitated having proved unavailing. Now that the wretched father and husband was dead, the wife for whom the bread was stolen had become a great lady, the boy was at length to receive the aid that wealth could give him. Poor George Claude Sonsius has nothing to do with our story, but his fate led to the alleviation of a great deal of misery

that otherwise might have been in store for millions of human beings.

Loud and clear rang out the cry, "What was the use of denouncing slavery when what like this was allowed to pass unheeded by the side of superfluous wealth?" The slave-owner has sufficient interest in his slaves, it was alleged, as a rule, to care for their well-being. Even criminals were clothed and fed.

Had not, it was asked, every human being the right to demand from a world which through the resources of experience and science became constantly more productive a sufficiency of sustenance?

The inquest room was crowded. The coroner and jury were strongly affected as they viewed the body laid out in a luxuriously appointed coffin. Wealth denied to the living was lavished on the dead. No longer in rags and tatters, the lifeless body seemed to revert to the past. Shrunken as was the frame, and emaciated the features, there remained evidence sufficient to show that the now inanimate form was once a fine and handsome man.

The evidence was short, and the summing up of the coroner decisive. He insisted that the baker had not wilfully committed wrong and should not be made responsible for the consequences that followed his rough recovery of his property. A butcher and a general provision dealer on the jury took strongly the same view. How were poor tradesmen to protect themselves? They must take the law in their own hands, they argued, otherwise it would be better to submit to being robbed rather than waste

their time in police courts. They wanted a verdict of justifiable homicide. Another jurymen (a small builder) urged a verdict of misadventure; at first he called it peradventure. But the rest of the jury felt otherwise. Some desired a verdict of manslaughter, and it was long before the compromise of "Death by accident" was agreed to.

Deep groans filled the room as the result was announced. That same night a large crowd of men and women assembled outside the baker's shop with hostile demonstrations. The windows were destroyed, and an attempt made to break in the door. A serious riot would probably have ensued but for the arrival of a large body of police.

Again the fate of George Sonsius became the familiar topic of the press. But the impression was not an ephemeral one.

The fierce spirit of discontent which for years had been smouldering burst into flames. A secret society called the "Live and Let Live" was formed, with ramifications throughout the world. The force of numbers, the force of brute strength, was appealed to.

A bold and outspoken declaration was made that every human being had an inherent right to sufficient food and clothing and comfortable lodging. Truly poor George Sonsius died for the good of many millions of his fellow-creatures. Our history will show the point at length achieved.

Shortly after poor Sonsius' death a remarkable meeting was held in the city of London. The representatives of six of the

largest financial houses throughout the globe assembled by agreement to discuss the present material condition of the world and its future prospects. There was Lord de Cardrosse, head of the English house of that name and chief, moreover, of the family, whose branches presided over princely houses of finance in six of the chief cities of the continent of Europe. Second only in power in Great Britain, the house of Bisdat and Co. was represented by Charles James Bisdat, a man of scarcely forty, but held to be the greatest living authority on abstruse financial questions. The Dutch house of Von Serge Brothers was represented by its head, Cornelius Julius Von Serge. The greatest finance house in America, Rorgon, Bryce and Co., appeared by its chief, Henry Tudor Rorgon; and the scarcely less powerful house of Lockay, Stanfield and Co., of San Francisco, Melbourne, Sydney, and Wellington, was represented by its chief, Alfred Demetrius. The German and African house of Werther, Scribe and Co. was present in the person of its head, Baron Scribe; and the French and Continental houses of the De Cardrosse family were represented by the future head of the family, the Baroness de Cardrosse. The deliberations were carried on in French.

Two or more of these houses had no doubt from time to time worked together in one transaction; but their uniform position was one of independence towards each other, verging more towards antagonism than to union. In fact, the junction for ordinary purposes of such vast powers as these kings of finance

wielded would be fatal to liberty and freedom.

A single instance will suffice to show the power referred to, which even one group of financiers could wield.

Five years previously all Europe was in a ferment. War was expected from every quarter. It depended not on one, but on many questions. The alliances were doubtful. Nothing seemed certain but that neutrality would be impossible, and that the Continent would be divided into two or more great camps. The final decision appeared to rest with Great Britain. There an ominous disposition for war was displaying itself. The inclination of the Sovereign and the Cabinet was supposed to be in that direction. But the family of De Cardrosses throughout Europe was for peace. The chief of the family was the head of the English house, and it was decided he should interview the Prime Minister of England and acquaint him with the views of this great financial group. His reception was not flattering; but if he felt mortified, he did not show it. He expressed himself deeply sensible of the honour done to him by his being allowed to state his opinions; and with a reverential inclination he bowed himself from the presence of the greatest statesman of his day, the Right Honourable Randolph Stanley. That afternoon it was bruited about that, in view of coming possibilities, the De Cardrosse family had determined to realise securities all over Europe and send gold to America. The next morning a disposition to sell was reported from every direction, and five millions sterling of gold were collected for despatch to New York. In twenty-four

hours there was a panic throughout Great Britain and Europe. The Bank of England asked for permission to suspend specie payments, but could indicate no limit to which such a permission should be set. It seemed as if Europe would be drained of gold.

The great rivals of the De Cardrosses looked on and either could not or would not interfere. A hurried Cabinet meeting was convened, and as a result a conference by telephone was arranged between the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the Ministers of the Great Powers of Europe. Commencing by twos and threes, the conference developed into an assemblage for conversational purposes of at least twenty of the chief statesmen and diplomatists of the Old World. Rumour said that even monarchs in two or three cases were present and inspired the telephonic utterances of their Ministers. How the result was arrived at was known best to those who took part in the conference, but peace and disarmament were agreed on if certain contingencies involving the exercise of vast power and the expenditure of enormous capital could be provided for. No other conclusion could be arrived at, and one way or the other the outcome had to be settled within twenty-four hours. The conference had lasted from ten o'clock to four. At five o'clock by invitation Lord de Cardrosse waited on the Prime Minister, who received him much more cordially than before.

"You have caused me," he said, "to learn a great deal during the last forty-eight hours."

"I could not presume to teach you anything. Events have

spoken," was the reply.

"And who controlled them if not the houses of De Cardrosse?"

"You do us too much honour. It is you who govern; we are of those who are governed."

"The alliance between power and modesty," said the Prime Minister, with pardonable irony, "is irresistible. Tell me, my Lord, is it too late for your views to prevail?"

A slight, almost imperceptible start was the only movement the De Cardrosse made. The enormous self-repression he was exercising cannot be exaggerated. The future strength of the family depended on the issue. There was, however, no tremor in his voice when he answered, "If you adopt them, I do not think it is too late."

"But do you realise the sacrifices in all directions that have to be made?" said the Minister in faltering tones.

"I think I do."

"And you think to secure peace those sacrifices should be made?"

"I do."

"Will you tell me what those sacrifices are?" he asked.

Lord de Cardrosse smiled. "You desire me," he said, "to tell you what you already know." Then he proceeded to describe to the amazed Prime Minister in brief but pregnant terms one after the other the conditions that had been agreed on. Once only he paused and indicated that the condition he was describing he

accepted reluctantly.

"I do not conceal," said the astounded Prime Minister, "my surprise at the extent of your knowledge; and clearly you approve the only compromise possible. It is needless to tell you that the acceptance of this compromise requires the use of means not at the disposal of the Governments. In one word, will it suit you to supply them?"

"I might," responded Lord de Cardrosse, "ask you until two o'clock to-morrow to give an answer; but I do not wish to add to your anxiety. If you will undertake to entirely and absolutely confine within your own breast the knowledge of what my answer will be, I will undertake that that answer at two o'clock to-morrow shall be 'Yes.'"

Silently they shook hands. Probably these two men had never before so thoroughly appreciated the strength and speciality of their several powers.

The panic continued until two o'clock the following day, when an enormous reaction took place. The part the De Cardrosse family played in securing peace was suspected by a few only. Its full extent the Prime Minister alone knew. He it was who enjoyed the credit for saving the world from a desolating war.

And now, after an interval of five years, the sovereigns of finance met in conclave. In obedience to the generally expressed wish, Lord de Cardrosse took the chair. "I need scarcely say," he began, "that I am deeply sensible of the compliment you pay me in asking me to preside over such a meeting. We in this room

represent a living power throughout the globe, before which the reigning sovereigns of the world are comparatively helpless. But, because of our great strength, it is undesirable that we should work unitedly except for very great and humane objects. For the mere purpose of money-making, I feel assured you all agree with me in desiring no combination, no monopoly, that would pit us against the rest of the world."

He paused for a moment, evidently desiring to disguise the strength of the emotion with which he spoke.

He resumed in slower and apparently more mastered words. "I wish I could put it to you sufficiently strongly that our houses would not have considered any good that could result to them and to you a sufficient excuse for inviting such a combination. We hold that the only cause that could justify it is the conviction that for the good of mankind a vast power requires to be wielded which is not to be found in the ordinary machinery of government."

A murmur of applause went round the table; and Mr. Demetrius, with much feeling, said, "You make me very happy by the assurance you have given. I will not conceal from you that our house anticipated as much, or it would not have been represented. We are too largely concerned with States in which free institutions are permanent not to avoid anything which might savour of a disposition to combine financial forces for the benefit of financial houses."

Lord de Cardrosse then proceeded to explain that his family,

in serious and prolonged conclave, could come to no other conclusion than that certain influences were at work which would cause great suffering to mankind and sap and destroy the best institutions which civilisation and science had combined to create. The time had come to answer the question, Should human knowledge, human wants, and human skill continue to advance to an extent to which no limit could be put, or should the survival of the fittest and strongest be fought out in a period of anarchy?

"It amounts," he said in a tone of profound conviction, "to this: the ills under which the masses suffer accumulate. There is no use in comparing what they have to-day with what they had fifty years ago. A person who grows from infancy to manhood in a prison may feel contented until he knows what the liberty is that others enjoy. The born blind are happier than those who become blind by accident. To our masses the knowledge of liberty is open, and they feel they are needlessly deprived of it. Wider and wider to their increasing knowledge opens out the horizon of possible delights; more and more do they feel that they are deprived of what of right belongs to them."

He paused, as if inviting some remarks from his hearers.

Mr. Bisdat, who spoke in an interrogative rather than an affirmative tone, took up the thread.

"I am right, I think, in concluding that your remarks do not point against or in favour of any school of politics or doctrines of party. You direct our notice to causes below the surface to which the Government of the day—I had almost said the hour,—

do not penetrate, causes which you believe, if left to unchecked operation, will undermine the whole social fabric."

"It is so," emphatically replied Lord de Cardrosse. "The evils are not only apparent; but equally apparent is it that no remedy is being applied, and that we are riding headlong to anarchy."

Again he paused, and Mr. Rorgon took up the discussion. "If we," he said, "the princes of finance, do not find a remedy, how long will the enlarged intelligence of the people submit to conditions which are at war with the theory of the equality and liberty of mankind?"

"Yes," said the Baroness de Cardrosse, speaking for the first time, "it is clear that there is a limit to the inequality of fortune to which men and women will submit. Equality of possessions there cannot be; but, if I may indulge in metaphor, we cannot expect that the bulk of humankind will be content with being entirely shut out from the sunlight of existence."

The gentlemen present bowed low in approval; and Mr. Demetrius said, "The simile of the Baroness is singularly appropriate. There are myriads of human beings to whom the sunshine of life is denied. A too universal evil invites resistance by means which in lesser cases might be scouted. In short, if the remedy is left to anarchy, anarchy there will be. Even in our young lands the shadow of the coming evil is beginning to show itself. Indeed," he added, with an air of musing abstraction, "it is not unfair to deduce from what has been said, that, even if the evils are less in the new lands of the West and the South, superior

general intelligence may more than proportionally increase the wants of the multitude and the sense of wrong under which they labour."

The conference extended over three days. Every one agreed that interference with the ordinary conditions of finance was inexpedient except in extreme cases, but they were unanimous in thinking that an extreme case had to be dealt with. They finally decided by the use of an extended paper currency, with its necessary guarantees, to increase the circulating medium and to raise the prices both of products and labour. Some other decisions were adopted having especial reference to the employment of labour and insurance against want in cases of disablement through illness, accident, or old age.

So ended the most remarkable conference of any age or time.

CHAPTER I.

THE YEAR 2000— UNITED BRITAIN

Time has passed. There have been many alterations, few of an extreme character. The changes are mostly the results of gradual developments worked out by the natural progress of natural laws. But as constant dropping wears away a stone, constant progression, comparatively imperceptible in its course, attains to immense distances after the lapse of time. This applies though the momentum continually increases the rate of the progress. Thus the well-being of the human kind has undoubtedly increased much more largely during the period between 1900 and 2000 than during the previous century, but equally in either century would it be difficult to select any five years as an example of the turning-point of advancement. Progression, progression, always progression, has been the history of the centuries since the birth of Christ. Doubtless the century we have now entered on will be yet more fruitful of human advancement than any of its predecessors. The strongest point of the century which

"Has gone, with its thorns and its roses,
With the dust of dead ages to mix,"

has been the astonishing improvement of the condition of mankind and the no less striking advancement of the intellectual power of woman.

The barriers which man in his own interest set to the occupation of woman having once been broken down, the progress of woman in all pursuits requiring judgment and intellect has been continuous; and the sum of that progress is enormous. It has, in fact, come to be accepted that the bodily power is greater in man, and the mental power larger in woman. So to speak, woman has become the guiding, man the executive, force of the world. Progress has necessarily become greater because it is found that women bring to the aid of more subtle intellectual capabilities faculties of imagination that are the necessary adjuncts of improvement. The arts and caprices which in old days were called feminine proved to be the silken chains fastened by men on women to lull them into inaction. Without abating any of their charms, women have long ceased to submit to be the playthings of men. They lead men, as of yore, but not so much through the fancy or the senses as through the legitimate consciousness of the man that in following woman's guidance he is tending to higher purposes. We are generalising of course to a certain extent. The variable extent of women's influence is now, as it has been throughout the ages past, the point on which most of the dramas of the human race depend.

The increased enjoyment of mankind is a no less striking feature of the last hundred years. Long since a general

recognition was given to the theory that, whilst equality of possession was an impossible and indeed undesirable ideal, there should be a minimum of enjoyment of which no human being should be deprived unless on account of crime. Crime as an occupation has become unknown, and hereditary crime rendered impossible. On the other hand, the law has constituted such provisions for reserves of wealth that anything more than temporary destitution is precluded. Such temporary destitution can only be the result of sheer improvidence, the expenditure, for instance, within a day of what should be expended in a week. The moment it becomes evident, its recurrence is rendered impossible, because the assistance, instead of being given weekly, is rendered daily. Private charity has been minimised; indeed, it is considered to be injurious: and all laws for the recovery of debts have been abolished. The decision as to whether there is debt and its amount is still to be obtained, but the satisfaction of all debt depends solely on the sense of honour or expediency of the debtor. The posting the name of a debtor who refuses to satisfy his liabilities has been found to be far more efficacious than any process of law.

The enjoyment of what in the past would have been considered luxuries has become general. The poorest household has with respect to comforts and provisions a profusion which a hundred years since was wanting in households of the advanced classes.

Long since there dawned upon the world the conviction—
First. That labour or work of some kind was the only condition

of general happiness.

Second. That every human being was entitled to a certain proportion of the world's good things.

Third. That, as the capacity of machinery and the population of the world increased production, the theory of the need of labour could not be realised unless with a corresponding increase of the wants of mankind; and that, instead of encouraging a degraded style of living, it was in the interests of the happiness of mankind to encourage a style of living in which the refinements of life received marked consideration.

Great Britain, as it used to be called, has long ceased to be a bundle of sticks. The British dominions have been consolidated into the empire of United Britain; and not only is it the most powerful empire on the globe, but at present no sign is shown of any tendency to weakness or decay. Yet there was a time—about the year 1920—when the utter disintegration of the Empire seemed not only possible, but probable.

The Irish question was still undecided. For many years it had continued to be the sport of Ministers. Cabinet succeeded Cabinet; each had its Irish nostrum; each seemed to think that the Irish question was a good means of delaying questions nearer home. The power of the nation sensibly waned. What nation could be strong with pronounced disaffection festering in its midst? At length, when rumours of a great war were rife upon the result of which the very existence of Great Britain as a nation might depend, the Colonies interposed. By this time the

Canadian, Australasian, and Cape colonies had become rich, populous, and powerful. United, they far exceeded in importance the original mother-country.

At the instigation of the Premier of Canada, a confidential intercolonial conference was held. In consequence of the deliberations that ensued, a united representation was made to the Prime Minister of England to the effect that the Colonies could no longer regard without concern the prolonged disquiet prevailing in Ireland. They would suffer should any disaster overtake the Empire, and disaster was courted by permitting the continuation of Irish disaffection. Besides, the Colonies, enjoying as they did local government, could see no reason why Ireland should be treated differently. The message was a mandate, and was meant to be so. The Prime Minister of England, however, puffed up with the pride of old traditions, did not or would not so understand it, and returned an insolent answer. Within twenty-four hours the Colonial Ministers sent a joint respectful address to the King of England representing that they were equally his Majesty's advisers with his Ministers residing in England, and refusing to make any further communications to or through his present advisers.

The Ministry had to retire; a new one was formed. Ireland received the boon it had long claimed of local government, and the whole Empire was federated on the condition that the federation was irrevocable and that every part of it should fight to the last to preserve the union. The King of England and

Emperor of India was crowned amidst great pomp Emperor of Britain. All parts of the Empire joined their strength and resources. A federal fleet was formed on the basis that it was to equal in power in every respect the united fleets of all the rest of the world. Conferences with the Great Powers took place in consequence of which Egypt, Belgium, and the whole of the ports bordering the English Channel and Straits of Dover, and the whole of South Africa became incorporated into the empire of Britain. Some concessions, however, were made in other directions. These results were achieved within fifteen years of the interference by the Colonies in federal affairs, and the foundation was laid for the powerful empire which Britain has become. Two other empires and one republic alone approach it in power, and a cordial understanding exists between them to repress war to the utmost extent possible. They constitute the police of the world. Each portion of the Emperor of Britain's possessions enjoys local government, but the federal government is irresistibly strong. It is difficult to say which is the seat of government, as the Federal Parliament is held in different parts of the world, and the Emperor resides in many places. With the utmost comfort he can go from end to end of his dominions in twelve days.

If a headquarter does remain, it may probably be conceded that Alexandria fulfils that position.

The House of Lords has ceased to exist as a separate chamber. The peers began to feel ashamed of holding positions not in

virtue of their abilities, but because of the accident of birth. It was they who first sought and ultimately obtained the right to hold seats in the elective branch of the Legislature; and finally it was decided that the peerage should elect a certain number of its own members to represent it in the Federal Parliament: in other words, the accidents of birth were controlled by the selection of the fittest.

Our scene opens in Melbourne, in the year 2000—a few years prior to the date at which we are writing. The Federal Parliament was sitting there that year. The Emperor occupied his magnificent palace on the banks of the Yarra, above Melbourne, which city and its suburbs possessed a population of nearly two millions.

In a large and handsome room in the Federal buildings, a young woman of about twenty-three years of age was seated. She was born in New Zealand. She entered the local parliament before she was twenty.¹ At twenty-two she was elected to the Federal Parliament, and she had now become Under-Secretary of State for Home Affairs. From her earliest youth she had never failed in any intellectual exercise. Her intelligence was considered phenomenal. Her name was Hilda Richmond Fitzherbert. She was descended from families which for upwards of a century produced distinguished statesmen—a word, it should be mentioned, which includes both sexes. She was fair

¹ Every adult of eighteen years of age was allowed to vote and was consequently, by the laws of the Empire, eligible for election.

to look at in both face and figure. Dark violet eyes, brown hair flecked with a golden tinge, clearly cut features, and a glorious complexion made up a face artistically perfect; but these charms were what the observer least noticed. The expression of the face was by far its chief attraction, and words fail to do justice to it. There was about it a luminous intelligence, a purity, and a pathos that seemed to belong to another world. No trace of passion yet stamped it. If the love given to all humanity ever became a love devoted to one person, the expression of the features might descend from the spiritual to the passionate. Even then to human gaze it might become more fascinating. But that test had not come. As she rose from her chair you saw that she was well formed, though slight in figure and of full height. She went to an instrument at a side-table, and spoke to it, the materials for some half-dozen letters referring to groups of papers that lay on the table. When she concluded, she summoned a secretary, who removed the papers and the phonogram on which her voice had been impressed. These letters were reproduced, and brought to her for signature. Copies attached to the several papers were initialled. Meanwhile she paced up and down the room in evident deep distraction. At length she summoned a messenger, and asked him to tell the Countess of Middlesex that she wished to see her. In a few minutes Lady Middlesex entered the room. She was about thirty years of age, of middle height, and pleasing appearance, though a close observer might imagine he saw something sinister in the expression of her countenance. After a

somewhat ceremonious greeting, Miss Fitzherbert commenced: "I have carefully considered what passed at our last interview. It is difficult to separate our official and unofficial relations. I am still at a loss to determine whether you have spoken to me as the Assistant Under-Secretary to the Under-Secretary or as woman to woman."

Lady Middlesex quickly rejoined, "Will you let me speak to you as woman to woman, and forget for a moment our official relations?"

"Can you doubt it?" replied Miss Fitzherbert. "But remember that our wishes are not always under our control, and that, though I may not desire to remember to your prejudice what you say, I may not be able to free myself from recollection."

"And yet," said Lady Middlesex, with scarcely veiled irony, "the world says Miss Fitzherbert does not know what prejudice means!"

The slightest possible movement of impatience was all the rejoinder vouchsafed to this speech.

Lady Middlesex continued, "I spoke to you as strongly as I dared, as strongly as my position permitted, about my brother Reginald—Lord Reginald Paramatta. He suffers under a sense of injury. He is miserable. He feels that it is to you that he owes his removal to a distant station. He loves you, and does not know if he may venture to tell you so."

"No woman," replied Miss Fitzherbert, "is warranted in regarding with anger the love of a good man; but you know, or

ought to know, that my life is consecrated to objects that are inconsistent with my entertaining the love you speak of."

"But," said Lady Middlesex, "can you be sure that it always will be so?"

"We can be sure of nothing."

"Nay," replied Lady Middlesex, "do not generalise. Let me at least enjoy the liberty you have accorded me. If you did not feel that there were possibilities for Reginald in conflict with your indifference, why should you trouble yourself with his removal?"

"I have not admitted that I am concerned in his removal."

"You know you are; you cannot deny it."

Miss Fitzherbert was dismayed at the position into which she had allowed herself to be forced. She must either state what truth forbade or admit that to some extent Lord Reginald had obtained a hold on her thoughts.

"Other men," pursued Lady Middlesex, with remorseless directness, "have aspired as Reginald does; and you have known how to dispose of their aspirations without such a course as that of which my brother has been the object."

"I have understood," said Miss Fitzherbert, "that Lord Reginald is promoted to an important position, one that ought to be intensely gratifying to so comparatively young a man."

"My brother has only one wish, and you are its centre. He desires only one position."

"I did not infer, Lady Middlesex," said Miss Fitzherbert, with some haughtiness, "that you designed to use the permission you

asked of me to become a suitor on your brother's behalf."

"Why else should I have asked such permission?" replied Lady Middlesex, with equal haughtiness. Then, with a sudden change of mood and manner, "Miss Fitzherbert, forgive me. My brother is all in all to me. My husband and my only child are dead. My brother is all that is left to me to remind me of a once happy home. Do not, I pray, I entreat you, embitter his life. Ask yourself—forgive me for saying so—if ambition rather than consecration to a special career may not influence you; and if your conscience replies affirmatively, remember the time will come to you, as it has come to other women, when success, the applause of the crowd, and a knowledge of great deeds effected will prove a poor consolation for the want of one single human being on whom to lavish a woman's love. Most faculties become smaller by disuse, but it is not so with the affections; they revenge themselves on those who have dared to disbelieve in their force."

"You assume," said Miss Fitzherbert, "that I love your brother."

"Is it not so?"

"No! a thousand times no!"

"You feel that you might love him. That is the dawn of love."

"Listen, Lady Middlesex. That dawn has not opened to me. I will not deny, I have felt a prepossession in favour of your brother; but I have the strongest conviction that my life will be better and happier because of my refusing to give way to it. For me there is no love of the kind. In lonely maidenhood I will live

and die. If my choice is unwise, I will be the sufferer; and I have surely the right to make it. My lady, our interview is at an end."

Lady Middlesex rose and bowed her adieu, but another thought seemed to occur to her. "You will," she said, "at least see my brother before he goes. Indeed, otherwise I doubt his leaving. He told me this morning that he would resign."

Miss Fitzherbert after a moment's thought replied, "I will see your brother. Bid him call on me in two hours' time. Good-bye."

As she was left alone a look of agony came over her face. "Am I wise?" she said. "That subtle woman knew how to wound me. She is right. I could love; I could adore the man I loved. Will all the triumphs of the world and the sense of the good I do to others console me during the years to come for the sunshine of love to which every woman has a claim? Yes, I do not deny the claim, high as my conception is of a woman's destiny." After a few moments' pause, she started up indignantly. "Am I then," she ejaculated half aloud, "that detestable thing a woman with a mission, and does the sense of that mission restrain me from yielding to my inclination?" Again she paused, and then resumed, "No, it is not so. I have too easily accepted Lady Middlesex's insinuation. I am neither ambitious nor philanthropic to excess. It is a powerful instinct that speaks to me about Lord Reginald. To a certain extent I am drawn to him, but I doubt him, and it is that which restrains me. I am more disposed to be frightened of than to love him. Why do I doubt him? Some strong impulse teaches me to do so. What do I doubt? I doubt his loving me with a

love that will endure, I doubt our proving congenial companions, and—why may I not say it to myself?—I doubt his character. I question his sincerity. The happiness of a few months might be followed by a life of misery. I must be no weak fool to allow myself to be persuaded."

Hilda Fitzherbert was a thoroughly good, true-hearted, and lovable girl. Clever, well informed, and cultivated to the utmost, she had no disposition to prudery or priggishness. She was rather inclined to under- than over-value herself. Lady Middlesex's clever insinuations had caused her for the moment to doubt her own conduct; but reflection returned in time, and once more she became conscious that she felt for Lord Reginald no more attachment than any woman might entertain for a handsome, accomplished man who persistently displayed his admiration. She was well aware that under ordinary circumstances such feelings as she had, might develop into strong love if there were no reverse to the picture; but in this case conviction—call it, if you will, an instinct—persuaded her there was an opposite side. She felt that Lord Reginald was playing a part; that, if his true character stood revealed to her, an unfathomable abyss would yawn between them.

Her reflections were disturbed by the entrance of a lady of very distinguished mien. She might indeed look distinguished, for the Right Honourable Mrs. Hardinge was not only Prime Minister of the empire of Britain, but the most powerful and foremost statesman in the world. In her youth she had been a

lovely girl; and even now, though not less than forty years of age, she was a beautiful—it might be more correct to say, a grand—woman. A tall, dignified, and stately figure was set off by a face of which every feature was artistically correct and capable of much variety of expression; and over that expression she held entire command. She had, if she wished it, an arch and winning manner, such as no one but a cultivated Irishwoman possesses; the purest Irish blood ran through her veins. She could say "No" in a manner that more delighted the person whose request she was refusing than would "Yes" from other lips. An adept in all the arts of conversation, she could elicit information from the most inscrutable statesmen, who under her influence would fancy she was more confidential to them than they to her. By indomitable strength she had fought down an early inclination to impulsiveness. The appearance still remained, but no statesman was more slow to form opinions and less prone to change them. She could, if necessary, in case of emergency, act with lightning rapidity; but she had schooled herself to so act only in cases of extreme need. She had a warm heart, and in the private relations of life no one was better liked.

Hilda Fitzherbert worshipped her; and Mrs. Hardinge, childless and with few relations, loved and admired the girl with a strength and tenacity that made their official relations singularly pleasant.

"My dear Hilda," she said, "why do you look so disturbed, and how is it you are idle? It is rare to find you unoccupied."

Hilda, almost in tears, responded, "Dear Mrs. Hardinge, tell me, do tell me, what do you really think of Lord Reginald Paramatta?"

If Mrs. Hardinge felt any surprise at the extraordinary abruptness of the question, she did not permit it to be visible.

"My dear, the less you think of him the better. I will tell you how I read his character. He is unstable and insincere, capable of any exertion to attain the object on which he has set his mind; the moment he has gained it the victory becomes distasteful to him. I have offered him the command of our London forces to please you, but I tell you frankly I did so with reluctance. Nor would I have promoted him to the post but that it has long ceased to possess more than traditional importance. Those chartered sybarites the Londoners can receive little harm from Lord Reginald, and the time has long passed for him to receive any good. Such as it is, his character is moulded; and professionally he is no doubt an accomplished officer and brave soldier. Besides that, he possesses more than the ordinary abilities of a man."

Hilda looked her thanks, but said no more than "Your opinion does not surprise me, and it tallies with my own judgment."

"Dear girl, do not try to dispute that judgment. And now to affairs of much importance. I have come from the Emperor, and I see great difficulties in store for us."

Probably Hilda had never felt so grateful to Mrs. Hardinge as she did now for the few words in which she had expressed

so much, with such fine tact. An appearance of sympathy or surprise would have deeply wounded the girl.

"Dear mamma," she said—as sometimes in private in moments of affection she was used to do—"does his Highness still show a disinclination to the settlement to which he has almost agreed?"

"He shows the most marked disinclination, for he told me with strong emotion that he felt he would be sacrificing the convictions of his race."

The position of the Emperor was indeed a difficult one. A young, high-spirited, generous, and brave man, he was asked by his Cabinet to take a step which in his heart he abhorred. A short explanation is necessary to make the case clear. When the Imperial Constitution of Britain was promulgated, women were beginning to acquire more power; but no one thought of suggesting that the preferential succession to the direct heirs male should be withdrawn.

Meanwhile women advanced, and in all other classes of life they gained perfect equality with regard to the laws of succession and other matters, but the custom still remained by which the eldest daughter of the Emperor would be excluded in favour of the eldest son. Some negotiations had proceeded concerning the marriage of the Emperor to the daughter of the lady who enjoyed the position of President of the United States, an intense advocate of woman's equality. She was disposed, if not determined, to make it a condition of the marriage that the eldest child, whether

son or daughter, should succeed. The Emperor's Cabinet had the same view, and it was one widely held throughout the Empire. But there were strong opinions on the other side. The increasing number of women elected by popular suffrage to all representative positions and the power which women invariably possessed in the Cabinet aroused the jealous anger of men. True, the feeling was not in the ascendant, and other disabilities of women were removed; but in this particular case, the last, it may be said, of women's disabilities, a separate feeling had to be taken into account. The ultra-Conservatives throughout the Empire, including both men and women, were superstitiously tenacious of upholding the Constitution in its integrity and averse to its being changed in the smallest particular. They felt that everything important to the Empire depended upon the irrevocable nature of the Constitution, and that the smallest change might be succeeded by the most organic alterations. The merits of the question mattered nothing in their opinion in comparison with the principle which they held it was a matter of life and death not to disturb.

It was now proposed to introduce a Bill to enable the Emperor to declare that the succession should be to the eldest child. The Cabinet were strongly in favour of it, and to a great extent their existence as a Government depended on it. The Emperor was well disposed to his present advisers, but, it was no secret, was strongly averse to this one proposal. The contemplated match was an affair of State policy rather than of inclination. He

had seldom met his intended bride, and was not prepossessed with her. She was good-looking and a fine girl; but she had unmistakably red hair, an adornment not to his taste. Besides, she was excessively firm in her opinions as to the superiority of women over men; and he strongly suspected she would be forever striving to rule not only the household, but the Empire. It is difficult to fathom the motives of the human mind, difficult not only to others, but to the persons themselves concerned. The Emperor thought that his opposition to placing the succession on an equality between male and female was purely one of loyalty to his ancestors and to the traditions of the Empire. But who could say that he did not see in a refusal to pass the necessary Act a means of escaping the distasteful nuptials? Mrs. Hardinge had come from a long interview with him, and it was evident that she greatly doubted his continued support. She resumed, "His Highness seems very seriously to oppose the measure, and indeed quite ready to give up his intended marriage. I wonder," she said, looking keenly at Hilda, "whether he has seen any girl he prefers."

The utter unconsciousness with which Hilda heard this veiled surmise appeared to satisfy Mrs. Hardinge; and she continued, "Tell me, dear, what do you think?"

"I am hardly in a position to judge. Does the Emperor give no reasons for his opposition?"

"Yes, he has plenty of reasons; but his strongest appears to be that whoever is ruler of the Empire should be able to lead its

armies."

"I thought," said Miss Fitzherbert, "that he had some good reason."

"Do you consider this a good reason?" inquired Mrs. Hardinge sharply.

"From his point of view, yes; from ours, no," said Hilda gently, but promptly.

"Then you do not think that we should retreat from our position even if retreat were possible?"

"No," replied Hilda. "Far better to leave office than to make a concession of which we do not approve in order to retain it."

"You are a strange girl," said Mrs. Hardinge. "If I understand you rightly, you think both sides are correct."

"I think that there is a great deal to be said on both sides, and this is constantly the case with important controversies. Between the metal and the flint the spark of truth is struck. I should think it no disgrace to be defeated on a subject about which we could show good cause. I might even come to think that better cause had been shown against us after the discussion was over; but to flee the discussion, to sacrifice conviction to expediency—that would be disgraceful."

"Then," said Mrs. Hardinge, with some interest, "if the Emperor were to ask your opinion, you would try to persuade him to our side?"

"Yes and no. I would urge strongly my sense of the question and my opinion that it is better to settle at once a controversy

about which there is so much difference of opinion. But I should respect his views; and if they were conscientious, I should not dare to advise him to sacrifice them."

An interruption unexpected by Miss Fitzherbert, but apparently not surprising to Mrs. Hardinge, occurred. An aide-de-camp of the Emperor entered. After bowing low to the ladies, he briefly said, "His Imperial Majesty desires the presence of Miss Fitzherbert."

A summons so unusual raised a flush to the girl's cheek. She looked at Mrs. Hardinge.

"I had intended to tell you," said that lady, "that the Emperor mentioned he would like to speak to you on the subject we have been considering." Then, turning to the aide-de-camp, she said, "Miss Fitzherbert will immediately wait on his Majesty."

The officer left the room.

Hilda archly turned to Mrs. Hardinge. "So, dear mamma, you were preparing me for this interview?"

"Dear child," said the elder lady, "you want no preparation. Whatever the consequences to me, I will not ask you to put any restraint on the expression of your opinions."

CHAPTER II.

THE EMPEROR AND HILDA FITZHERBERT

The Emperor received Miss Fitzherbert with a cordial grace, infinitely pleasing and flattering to that young lady. She of course had often seen his Majesty at Court functions, but never before had he summoned her to a separate audience. And indeed, high though her official position and reputation were, she did not hold Cabinet rank; and a special audience was a rare compliment, such as perhaps no one in her position had ever previously enjoyed.

The Emperor was a tall man of spare and muscular frame, with the dignity and bearing of a practised soldier. It was impossible not to recognise that he was possessed of immense strength and power of endurance. He had just celebrated his twenty-seventh birthday, and looked no more than his age. His face was of the fair Saxon type. His eyes were blue, varying with his moods from almost dark violet to a cold steel tint. Few persons were able to disguise from him their thoughts when he fixed on them his eyes, with the piercing enquiry of which they were capable. His eyes were indeed singularly capable of a great variety of expression. He could at will make them denote the thoughts and feelings which he wished to make apparent to those with whom he conversed. Apart from his position, no one could

look at him without feeling that he was a distinguished man. He was of a kindly disposition, but capable of great severity, especially towards any one guilty of a mean or cowardly action. He was of a highly honourable disposition, and possessed an exalted sense of duty. He rarely allowed personal inclination to interfere with public engagements; indeed, he was tenaciously sensitive on the point, and sometimes fancied that he permitted his judgment to be obscured by his prepossessions when he had really good grounds for his conclusions. On the very subject of his marriage he was constantly filled with doubt as to whether his objection to the proposed alteration in the law of succession was well founded on public grounds or whether he was unconsciously influenced by his personal disinclination to the contemplated union. He realised the truth of the saying of a very old author—

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

After indicating to Miss Fitzherbert his wish that she should be seated, he said to her, "I have been induced to ask your attendance by a long conversation I have had with Mrs. Hardinge. I have heard the opinions she has formed, and they seem to me the result of matured experience. It occurred to me that I would like to hear the opinions of one who, possessed of no less ability, has been less subject to official and diplomatic exigencies. I may gather from you how much of personal feeling should be allowed to influence State affairs."

"Your Majesty is very gracious," faltered Hilda, "but Mrs. Hardinge has already told you the opinion of the Cabinet. Even if I differed from it, which I do not, I could not venture to obtrude my view on your Majesty."

"Yes, you could," said the Emperor, "if I asked you, or let me say commanded you."

"Sir, your wishes are commands. I do not pretend to have deeply studied the matter. I think the time has come to finally settle a long-mooted question and to withdraw from woman the last disability under which she labours."

"My objection," interposed the Emperor, "or hesitation is in no manner caused by any doubt as to woman's deserving to be on a par with man in every intellectual position."

"Then, Sir, may I ask, why do you hesitate? The greatest Sovereign that ever reigned over Great Britain, as it was formerly called, was a woman."

"I cordially agree with you. No Sovereign ever deserved better of the subjects of the realm than my venerated ancestress Queen Victoria. But again I say, I do not question woman's ability to occupy the throne to the greatest advantage."

"Why, may I ask, then does your Majesty hesitate?"

"I can scarcely reply to my own satisfaction. I give great heed to the objections commonly stated against altering the Constitution, but I do not feel certain that these alone guide me. There is another, and to me very important, reason. It appeals to me not as Sovereign only, but as soldier. My father and my

grandfather led the troops of the Empire when they went forth to battle. Happily in our day war is a remote contingency, but it is not impossible. We preserve peace by being prepared for war. It seems to me a terrible responsibility to submit to a change which might result in the event of war in the army not being led by its emperor."

"Your Majesty," said Miss Fitzherbert, "what am I to say? To deny the cogency of your reasons is like seeking to retain power, for you know the fate of the Cabinet depends upon this measure, to which it has pledged itself."

"Miss Fitzherbert," said the Emperor gravely, "no one will suspect you of seeking to retain office for selfish purposes, and least of all would I suppose it, or I would not ask your counsel. Tell me now," he said, with a winning look, "as woman to man, not as subject to Sovereign, what does your heart dictate?"

"Sir," said Miss Fitzherbert with great dignity, rising from her seat, "I am deeply sensible of the honour you do me; and I cannot excuse myself from responding to it. In the affairs of life, and more especially State affairs, I have noticed that both sides to a controversy have frequently good grounds for their advocacy; and, moreover, it often happens that previous association fastens on each side the views it holds. I am strong in the belief, we are right in wishing this measure to pass; but since you insist on my opinion, I cannot avoid declaring as far as I, a non-militant woman, can judge, that, were I in your place, I would hold the sentiment you express and refuse my sanction."

Hilda spoke with great fervour, as one inspired. The Emperor scarcely concealed his admiration; but he merely bowed courteously, and ended the interview with the words, "I am greatly indebted to you for your frankness and candour."

CHAPTER III.

LORD REGINALD PARAMATTA

As Miss Fitzherbert returned to her room, she did not know whether to feel angry or pleased with herself. She was conscious she had not served the interest of her party or of herself, but she realised that she was placed in a situation in which candour was demanded of her, and it seemed to her that the Emperor was the embodiment of all that was gracious and noble in man.

Her secretary informed her that Lord Reginald Paramatta was waiting to see her by appointment.

Lord Reginald was a man of noticeable presence. Above the ordinary height, he seemed yet taller because of the extreme thinness of his frame. Yet he by no means wore an appearance of delicacy. On the contrary, he was exceedingly muscular; and his bearing was erect and soldierlike. He was well known as a brilliant officer, who had deeply studied his profession. But he was not only known as a soldier: he held a high political position. He had for many years continued to represent an Australian constituency in the Federal Parliament. His naturally dark complexion was further bronzed by exposure to the sun. His features were good and strikingly like those of his sister, the Countess of Middlesex. He had also the same sinister expression. The Paramattas were a very old New South Wales family. They

were originally sheep-farmers, or squatters as they used to be called. They owned large estates in New South Wales and nearly half of a thriving city. The first lord was called to the peerage in 1930, in recognition of the immense sums that he had devoted to philanthropic and educational purposes. Lord Reginald was the second son of the third and brother of the fourth peer. He inherited from his mother a large estate in the interior of New South Wales.

Miss Fitzherbert greeted Lord Reginald with marked coolness. "Your sister," she said, "told me you were kind enough to desire to wish me farewell before you left to take the London command, upon which allow me to congratulate you."

"Thanks!" briefly replied his Lordship. "An appointment that places me so far from you is not to my mind a subject of congratulation."

Miss Fitzherbert drew herself up, and with warmth remarked, "I am surprised that you should say this to me."

"You ought not to be surprised," replied Lord Reginald. "My sister told you of my feelings towards you, if indeed I have not already sufficiently betrayed them."

"Your sister must have also told you what I said in reply. Pray, my lord, do not inflict on both of us unnecessary pain."

"Do not mistake my passion for a transitory one. Miss Fitzherbert, Hilda, my life is bound up in yours. It depends on you to send me forth the most happy or the most miserable of men."

"Your happiness would not last. I am convinced we are utterly unsuited to each other. My answer is 'No' in both our interests."

"Do not say so finally. Take time. Tell me I may ask you again after the lapse of some few months."

"To tell you so would be to deceive. My answer can never change."

"You love some one else, then?"

"The question, my lord, is not fair nor seemly, nor have you the right to put it. Nevertheless I will say there is no foundation for your surmise."

"Then why finally reject me? Give me time to prove to you how thoroughly I am in earnest."

"I have not said I doubted it. But no lapse of years can alter the determination I have come to. I hope, Lord Reginald, that you will be happy, and that amidst the distractions of London you will soon forget me."

"That would be impossible, but it will not be put to the test. I shall not go to London. I believe it is your wish that we should be separated."

"I have no wish on the subject. There is nothing more to be said," replied Hilda, with extreme coldness.

"Yes, there is. Do not think that I abandon my hope. I will remain near you. I will not let you forget me. I leave you in the conviction that some day you will give me a different answer. When the world is less kind to you than hitherto, you may learn to value the love of one devoted being. There is no good-bye

between us."

Hilda suppressed the intense annoyance that both his words and manner occasioned. She merely remarked, with supreme hauteur, "You will at least be good enough to rid me of your presence here."

Her coldness seemed to excite the fury of Lord Reginald beyond the point of control. "As I live, you shall repent this in the future," he muttered in audible accents.

Shortly afterwards a letter from Lord Reginald was laid before the Premier. He was gratified, he wrote, for the consideration the official appointment displayed; but he could not accept it: his parliamentary duties forbade his doing so. If, he continued, it was considered that his duty as an officer demanded his accepting the offer, he would send in his papers and retire from the service, though of course he would retain his position in the Volunteer force unless the Emperor wished otherwise.

It should be explained that the Volunteer force was of at least equal importance to the regular service. Officers had precedence interchangeably according to seniority. Long since the absurdity had been recognised of placing the Volunteer force on a lower footing than the paid forces. Regular officers eagerly sought to be elected to commands in Volunteer regiments, and the colonel of a Volunteer regiment enjoyed fully as much consideration in every respect as the colonel of any of the paid regiments. The duty of defending all parts of the Empire from invasion was specially assigned to volunteers. The Volunteer force throughout

the Empire numbered at least two million, besides which there was a Volunteer reserve force of three quarters of a million, which comprised the best men selected from the volunteers. The vacancies were filled up each year by fresh selections to make up the full number. The Volunteer reserve force could be mobilised at short notice, and was available for service anywhere. Its members enjoyed many prized social distinctions. The regular force of the Empire was comparatively small. In order to understand the availability of the Volunteer reserve force, regard must be had to the immense improvement in education. No child attained man or woman's estate without a large theoretical and practical knowledge of scientific laws and their ordinary application. For example, few adults were so ignorant as not to understand the modes by which motive power of various descriptions was obtained and the principles on which the working depended—each person was more or less an engineer. A hundred years since, education was deemed to be the mastering of a little knowledge about a great variety of subjects. Thoroughness was scarcely regarded, and the superficial apology for preferring quantity to quality was "Education does not so much mean imparting knowledge as training the faculties to acquire it." This plausible plea afforded the excuse for wasting the first twenty years of life of both sexes in desultory efforts to acquire a mastery over the dead languages. "It is a good training to the mind and a useful means of learning the living languages" was in brief the defence for the shocking waste of time.

Early in the last century it fell to the lot of the then Prince of Wales, great-grandfather to the present Emperor, to prick this educational bladder. He stoutly declared that his sons should learn neither Latin nor Greek. "Why," he said, "should we learn ancient Italian any more than the Italians should learn the dialects of the ancient Britons?"

"There is a Greek and Latin literature," was the reply, "but no literature of ancient Britain."

"Yes," replied the Prince, "there is a literature; but does our means of learning the dead languages enable two persons in ten thousand after years of study to take up promiscuously a Latin or Greek book and read it with ease and comfort? They spend much more time in learning Latin and Greek than their own language, but who ever buys a Latin or Greek book to read when he is travelling?"

"But a knowledge of Latin is so useful in acquiring living languages."

"Fudge!" said this unceremonious prince, who, by the way, was more than an average classical scholar. "If I want to go to Liverpool, I do not proceed there by way of New York. I will back a boy to learn how to speak and read with interest three European languages before he shall be able, even with the aid of a dictionary, to laboriously master the meaning of a Latin book he has not before studied." He continued, "Do you think one person out of fifty thousand who have learnt Greek is so truly imbued with the spirit of the Iliad as are those whose only acquaintance

with it is through the translations of Derby, Gladstone, or even Pope? It is partly snobbishness," he proceeded, with increased warmth. "The fact is, it is expensive and wasteful to learn Greek and Latin; and so the rich use the acquirement as another means of walling up class against class. At any rate, I will destroy the fashion; and so that there shall be no loss of learning, I will have every Greek and Latin work not yet translated that can be read with advantage by decent and modest people rendered into the English language, if it cost me a hundred thousand pounds: and then there will be no longer an excuse for the waste of millions on dead languages, to say nothing of the loss occasioned by the want of education in other subjects that is consequent on the prominence given to the so-called classical attainments."

The Prince was equal to his word. Science and art, mathematical and technical acquirements, took the place of the classics; and people became really well informed. Living languages, it was found, could be easily learnt in a few months by personal intercourse with a fluent speaker.

This digression has been necessary to explain how it was that the volunteers were capable of acquiring all the scientific knowledge necessary to the ranks of a force trained to the highest military duties. As to the officers, the position was sufficiently coveted to induce competitors for command in Volunteer regiments to study the most advanced branches of the profession.

It will be understood Lord Reginald, while offering to retire

from the regular service, but intending to retain his Volunteer command, really made no military sacrifice, whilst he took up a high ground embarrassing to the authorities. He forced them either to accept his refusal of the London command, and be a party to the breach of discipline involved in a soldier declining to render service wherever it was demanded, or to require his retirement from the regular service, with the certainty of all kinds of questions being asked and surmises made.

It was no doubt unusual to offer him such a splendid command without ascertaining that he was ready to accept it, and there was a great risk of Miss Fitzherbert's name being brought up in an unpleasant manner. Women lived in the full light of day, and several journals were in the habit of declaring that the likes and dislikes of women were allowed far too much influence. What an opportunity would be afforded to them if they could hang ever so slightly Lord Reginald's retirement on some affair of the heart connected with that much-envied young statesman Miss Fitzherbert!

Mrs. Hardinge rapidly realised all the features of the case. "He means mischief, this man," she said; "but he shall not hurt Hilda if I can help it." Then she minuted "Write Lord Reginald that I regret he is unable to accept an appointment which I thought would give him pleasure, and which he is so qualified to adorn." She laughed over this sentence. "He will understand its irony," she thought, "and smart under it." She continued, "Add that I see no reason for his retirement from the regular service.

It was through accident he was not consulted before the offer was officially made. I should be sorry to deprive the Empire of his brilliant services. Mark 'Confidential.'" Then she thought to herself, "This is the best way out of it. He has gained to a certain extent a triumph, but he cannot make capital out of it."

CHAPTER IV.

PARTIAL VICTORY

Parliament was about to meet, and the Emperor was to open it with a speech delivered by himself. Much difference of opinion existed as to whether reference should be made to the question of altering the nature of the succession. The Emperor desired that all reference to it should be omitted. He told Mrs. Hardinge frankly he had decided not to agree to an alteration, but he said his greatest pain in refusing was the consciousness that it might deprive him of his present advisers. If the recommendation were formally made, he should be compelled to say that he would not concur until he had recourse to other advisers. He wished her not to impose on him such a necessity.

"But," said Mrs. Hardinge, "your Majesty is asking us to hold office at the expense of our opinions."

"Not so," replied his Majesty. "All pressing need of dealing with the question is over. I have resolved to break off the negotiations with the President of the United States for her daughter's hand. I do not think the union would be happy for either, and I take exception to the strong terms in which the President has urged a change in the succession of our imperial line. You see that the question is no longer an urgent one."

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