VARIOUS

BLACKWOOD'S EDINBURGH MAGAZINE, VOLUME 68, NO. 421, NOVEMBER 1850

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MY NOVEL; OR, VARIETIES IN ENGLISH LIFE

BY PISISTRATUS CAXTON

BOOK II – INITIAL CHAPTER: – INFORMING THE READER HOW THIS WORK CAME TO HAVE INITIAL CHAPTERS

"There can't be a doubt," said my father, "that to each of the main divisions of your work – whether you call them Books or Parts – you should prefix an Initial or Introductory Chapter."

Pisistratus. – "Can't be a doubt, sir! Why so?"

Mr Caxton. – "Fielding lays it down as an indispensable rule, which he supports by his example; and Fielding was an artistical writer, and knew what he was about."

Pisistratus. – "Do you remember any of his reasons, sir?"

Mr Caxton. – "Why, indeed, Fielding says very justly that he is not bound to assign any reason; but he does assign a good many, here and there – to find which, I refer you to *Tom Jones*. I will only observe, that one of his reasons, which is unanswerable, runs to the effect that thus, in every Part or Book, the reader has the advantage of beginning at the fourth or fifth page instead of the first – 'a matter by no means of trivial consequence,' saith Fielding, 'to persons who read books with no other view than to say they have read them – a more general motive to reading than is commonly imagined; and from which not only law books and good books, but the pages of Homer and Virgil, of Swift and

Cervantes have been often turned over.' There," cried my father triumphantly, "I will lay a shilling to twopence that I have quoted the very words."

Mrs Caxton. – "Dear me, that only means skipping: I don't see any great advantage in writing a chapter, merely for people to skip it."

Pisistratus. – "Neither do I!"

Mr Caxton, dogmatically. – "It is the repose in the picture – Fielding calls it 'contrast ' – (still more dogmatically) I say there can't be a doubt about it. Besides, (added my father after a pause,) besides, this usage gives you opportunities to explain what has gone before, or to prepare for what's coming; or, since Fielding contends with great truth, that some learning is necessary for this kind of historical composition, it allows you, naturally and easily, the introduction of light and pleasant ornaments of that nature. At each flight in the terrace, you may give the eye the relief of an urn or a statue. Moreover, when so inclined, you create proper pausing places for reflection; and complete, by a separate yet harmonious ethical department, the design of a work, which is but a mere Mother Goose's tale if it does not embrace a general view of the thoughts and actions of mankind."

Pisistratus. – "But then, in these initial chapters, the author thrusts himself forward; and just when you want to get on with the *dramatis personæ*, you find yourself face to face with the poet himself."

Mr Caxton. – "Pooh! you can contrive to prevent that! Imitate

the chorus of the Greek stage, who fill up the intervals between the action by saying what the author would otherwise say in his own person."

Pisistratus, slily. – "That's a good idea, sir – and I have a chorus, and a chorægus too, already in my eye."

Mr Caxton, unsuspectingly. – "Aha! you are not so dull a fellow as you would make yourself out to be; and, even if an author did thrust himself forward, what objection is there to that? It is a mere affectation to suppose that a book can come into the world without an author. Every child has a father, one father at least, as the great Condé says very well in his poem."

Pisistratus. – "The great Condé a poet! – I never heard that before."

Mr Caxton. – "I don't say he was a poet, but he sent a poem to Madame de Montansier. Envious critics think that he must have paid somebody else to write it; but there is no reason why a great Captain should not write a poem – I don't say a good poem, but a poem. I wonder, Roland, if the Duke ever tried his hand at 'Stanzas to Mary,' or 'Lines to a sleeping babe.'"

Captain Roland. – "Austin, I'm ashamed of you. Of course the Duke could write poetry if he pleased – something, I dare say, in the way of the great Condé – that is something warlike and heroic, I'll be bound. Let's hear!"

Mr Caxton, reciting —

"Telle est du Ciel la loi sévère

Qu'il faut qu'un enfant ait un père;
On dit même quelque fois
Tel enfant en a jusqu'à trois."

Captain Roland, greatly disgusted. – "Condé write such stuff! – I don't believe it."

Pisistratus. – "I do, and accept the quotation – you and Roland shall be joint fathers to my child as well as myself."

"Tel enfant en a jusqu'à trois."

Mr Caxton, solemnly. – "I refuse the proffered paternity; but so far as administering a little wholesome castigation, now and then, I have no objection to join in the discharge of a father's duty."

Pisistratus. – "Agreed; have you anything to say against the infant hitherto?"

Mr Caxton. – "He is in long clothes at present; let us wait till he can walk."

Blanche. – "But pray whom do you mean for a hero? – and is Miss Jemima your heroine?"

Captain Roland. – "There is some mystery about the – "

Pisistratus, hastily. – "Hush, Uncle; no letting the cat out of the bag yet. Listen, all of you! I left Frank Hazeldean on his way to the Casino."

CHAPTER II

"It is a sweet pretty place," thought Frank, as he opened the gate which led across the fields to the Casino, that smiled down upon him with its plaster pilasters. "I wonder, though, that my father, who is so particular in general, suffers the carriage road to be so full of holes and weeds. Mounseer does not receive many visits, I take it."

But when Frank got into the ground immediately before the house, he saw no cause of complaint as to want of order and repair. Nothing could be kept more neatly. Frank was ashamed of the dint made by the pony's hoofs in the smooth gravel; he dismounted, tied the animal to the wicket, and went on foot towards the glass door in front.

He rang the bell once, twice, but nobody came, for the old woman-servant, who was hard of hearing, was far away in the yard, searching for any eggs which the hen might have scandalously hidden from culinary purposes; and Jackeymo was fishing for the sticklebacks and minnows, which were, when caught, to assist the eggs, when found, in keeping together the bodies and souls of himself and his master. The old woman was on board wages, – lucky old woman! Frank rang a third time, and with the impetuosity of his age. A face peeped from the Belvidere on the terrace. "Diavolo!" said Dr Riccabocca to himself. "Young cocks crow hard on their own dunghill; it must

be a cock of a high race to crow so loud at another's."

Therewith he shambled out of the summer-house, and appeared suddenly before Frank, in a very wizard-like dressing robe of black serge, a red cap on his head, and a cloud of smoke coming rapidly from his lips, as a final consolatory whiff, before he removed the pipe from them. Frank had indeed seen the Doctor before, but never in so scholastic a costume, and he was a little startled by the apparition at his elbow, as he turned round.

"Signorino – young gentleman," said the Italian, taking off his cap with his usual urbanity, "pardon the negligence of my people – I am too happy to receive your commands in person."

"Dr Rickeybockey?" stammered Frank, much confused by this polite address, and the low yet stately bow with which it was accompanied, "I – I have a note from the Hall. Mama – that is, my mother, – and aunt Jemima beg their best compliments, and hope you will come, sir."

The Doctor took the note with another bow, and, opening the glass door, invited Frank to enter.

The young gentleman, with a schoolboy's usual bluntness, was about to say that he was in a hurry, and had rather not; but Dr Riccabocca's grand manner awed him, while a glimpse of the hall excited his curiosity – so he silently obeyed the invitation.

The hall, which was of an octagon shape, had been originally panelled off into compartments, and in these the Italian had painted landscapes, rich with the warm sunny light of his native climate. Frank was no judge of the art displayed; but he was

greatly struck with the scenes depicted: they were all views of some lake, real or imaginary – in all, dark-blue shining waters reflected dark-blue placid skies. In one, a flight of steps descended to the lake, and a gay group was seen feasting on the margin: in another, sunset threw its rose-hues over a vast villa or palace, backed by Alpine hills, and flanked by long arcades of vines, while pleasure-boats skimmed over the waves below. In short, throughout all the eight compartments, the scene, though it differed in details, preserved the same general character, as if illustrating some favourite locality. The Italian did not, however, evince any desire to do the honours to his own art, but, preceding Frank across the hall, opened the door of his usual sitting-room, and requested him to enter. Frank did so, rather reluctantly, and seated himself with unwonted bashfulness on the edge of a chair. But here new specimens of the Doctor's handicraft soon riveted attention. The room had been originally papered; but Riccabocca had stretched canvass over the walls, and painted thereon sundry satirical devices, each separated from the other by scroll-works of fantastic arabesques. Here a Cupid was trundling a wheelbarrow full of hearts, which he appeared to be selling to an ugly old fellow, with a money-bag in his hand – probably Plutus. There Diogenes might be seen walking through a market-place, with his lantern in his hand, in search of an honest man, whilst the children jeered at him, and the curs snapped at his heels. In another place, a lion was seen half dressed in a fox's hide, while a wolf in a sheep's mask was conversing very

amicably with a young lamb. Here again might be seen the geese stretching out their necks from the Roman Capitol in full cackle, while the stout invaders were beheld in the distance, running off as hard as they could. In short, in all these quaint entablatures some pithy sarcasm was symbolically conveyed; only over the mantelpiece was the design graver and more touching. It was the figure of a man in a pilgrim's garb, chained to the earth by small but innumerable ligaments, while a phantom likeness of himself, his shadow, was seen hastening down what seemed an interminable vista; and underneath were written the pathetic words of Horace —

> "Patriæ quis exul
> Se quoque fugit?."

– "What exile from his country can fly himself as well?" The furniture of the room was extremely simple, and somewhat scanty; yet it was arranged so as to impart an air of taste and elegance to the room. Even a few plaster busts and statues, though bought but of some humble itinerant, had their classical effect, glistening from out stands of flowers that were grouped around them, or backed by graceful screen-works formed from twisted osiers, which, by the simple contrivance of trays at the bottom, filled with earth, served for living parasitical plants, with gay flowers contrasting thick ivy leaves, and gave to the whole room the aspect of a bower.

"May I ask your permission?" said the Italian, with his finger on the seal of the letter.

"Oh yes," said Frank with *naiveté*.

Riccabocca broke the seal, and a slight smile stole over his countenance. Then he turned a little aside from Frank, shaded his face with his hand, and seemed to muse. "Mrs Hazeldean," said he at last, "does me very great honour. I hardly recognise her handwriting, or I should have been more impatient to open the letter." The dark eyes were lifted over the spectacles, and went right into Frank's unprotected and undiplomatic heart. The Doctor raised the note, and pointed to the characters with his forefinger.

"Cousin Jemima's hand," said Frank, as directly as if the question had been put to him.

The Italian smiled. "Mr Hazeldean has company staying with him?"

"No; that is, only Barney – the Captain. There's seldom much company before the shooting season," added Frank with a slight sigh; "and then you know the holidays are over. For my part, I think we ought to break up a month later."

The Doctor seemed reassured by the first sentence in Frank's reply, and seating himself at the table, wrote his answer – not hastily, as we English write, but with care and precision, like one accustomed to weigh the nature of words – in that stiff Italian hand, which allows the writer so much time to think while he forms his letters. He did not therefore reply at once to Frank's

remark about the holidays, but was silent till he had concluded his note, read it three times over, sealed it by the taper he slowly lighted, and then, giving it to Frank, he said —

"For your sake, young gentleman, I regret that your holidays are so early; for mine, I must rejoice, since I accept the kind invitation you have rendered doubly gratifying by bringing it yourself."

"Deuce take the fellow and his fine speeches! One don't know which way to look," thought English Frank.

The Italian smiled again, as if this time he had read the boy's heart, without need of those piercing black eyes, and said, less ceremoniously than before, "You don't care much for compliments, young gentleman?"

"No, I don't indeed," said Frank heartily.

"So much the better for you, since your way in the world is made: it would be so much the worse if you had to make it!"

Frank looked puzzled: the thought was too deep for him – so he turned to the pictures.

"Those are very funny," said he: "they seem capitally done – who did 'em?"

"Signorino Hazeldean, you are giving me what you refused yourself."

"Eh?" said Frank inquiringly.

"Compliments!"

"Oh – I – no; but they are well done, arn't they, sir?"

"Not particularly: you speak to the artist."

"What! you painted them?"

"Yes."

"And the pictures in the hall?"

"Those too."

"Taken from nature – eh?"

"Nature," said the Italian sententiously, perhaps evasively, "lets nothing be taken from her."

"Oh!" said Frank, puzzled again.

"Well, I must wish you good morning, sir; I am very glad you are coming."

"Without compliment?"

"Without compliment."

"*A rivedersi*– good-by for the present, my young signorino. This way," observing Frank make a bolt towards the wrong door.

"Can I offer you a glass of wine – it is pure, of our own making?"

"No, thank you, indeed, sir," cried Frank, suddenly recollecting his father's admonition. "Good-by – don't trouble yourself, sir; I know my way now."

But the bland Italian followed his guest to the wicket, where Frank had left the pony. The young gentleman, afraid lest so courteous a host should hold the stirrup for him, twitched off the bridle, and mounted in haste, not even staying to ask if the Italian could put him in the way to Rood Hall, of which way he was profoundly ignorant. The Italian's eye followed the boy as he rode up the ascent in the lane, and the Doctor sighed heavily.

"The wiser we grow," said he to himself, "the more we regret the age of our follies: it is better to gallop with a light heart up the stony hill than sit in the summer-house and cry 'How true!' to the stony truths of Machiavelli!"

With that he turned back into the Belvidere; but he could not resume his studies. He remained some minutes gazing on the prospect, till the prospect reminded him of the fields, which Jackeymo was bent on his hiring, and the fields reminded him of Lenny Fairfield. He walked back to the house, and in a few moments re-emerged in his out-of-door trim, with cloak and umbrella, relighted his pipe, and strolled towards Hazeldean village.

Meanwhile Frank, after cantering on for some distance, stopped at a cottage, and there learned that there was a short cut across the fields to Rood Hall, by which he could save nearly three miles. Frank, however, missed the short cut, and came out into the highroad: a turnpike keeper, after first taking his toll, put him back again into the short cut; and finally, he got into some green lanes, where a dilapidated finger-post directed him to Rood. Late at noon, having ridden fifteen miles in the desire to reduce ten to seven, he came suddenly upon a wild and primitive piece of ground, that seemed half Chase, half common, with slovenly tumble-down cottages of villanous aspect scattered about in odd nooks and corners; idle dirty children were making mud pies on the road; slovenly-looking women were plaiting straw at the thresholds; a large but forlorn and decayed church,

that seemed to say that the generation which saw it built was more pious than the generation which now resorted to it, stood boldly and nakedly out by the roadside.

"Is this the village of Rood?" asked Frank of a stout young man breaking stones on the road – sad sign that no better labour could be found for him!

The man sullenly nodded, and continued his work.

"And where's the Hall – Mr. Leslie's?"

The man looked up in stolid surprise, and this time touched his hat.

"Be you going there?"

"Yes, if I can find out where it is."

"I'll show your honour," said the boor alertly.

Frank reined in the pony, and the man walked by his side.

Frank was much of his father's son, despite the difference of age, and that more fastidious change of manner which characterises each succeeding race in the progress of civilisation. Despite all his Eton finery, he was familiar with peasants, and had the quick eye of one country-born as to country matters.

"You don't seem very well off in this village, my man?" said he knowingly.

"Noa; there be a deal of distress here in the winter time, and summer too, for that matter; and the parish ben't much help to a single man."

"But the farmers want work here as well as elsewhere, I suppose?"

"'Deed, and there ben't much farming work here – most o' the parish be all wild ground loike."

"The poor have a right of common, I suppose," said Frank, surveying a large assortment of vagabond birds and quadrupeds.

"Yes; neighbour Timmins keeps his geese on the common, and some has a cow – and them be neighbour Jowlas's pigs. I don't know if there's a right, loike; but the folks at the Hall does all they can to help us, and that ben't much: they ben't as rich as some folks; but," added the peasant proudly, "they be as good blood as any in the shire."

"I'm glad to see you like them, at all events."

"Oh yes, I likes them well eno'; mayhap you are at school with the young gentleman?"

"Yes," said Frank.

"Ah! I heard the clergyman say as how Master Randal was a mighty clever lad, and would get rich some day. I'se sure I wish he would, for a poor squire makes a poor parish. There's the Hall, sir."

CHAPTER III

Frank looked right ahead, and saw a square house that, in spite of modern sash-windows, was evidently of remote antiquity – a high conical roof; a stack of tall quaint chimney-pots of red baked clay (like those at Sutton Place in Surrey) dominating over isolated vulgar smoke-conductors, of the ignoble fashion of present times; a dilapidated groin-work, encasing within a Tudor arch a door of the comfortable date of George III., and the peculiarly dingy and weather-stained appearance of the small finely finished bricks, of which the habitation was built, – all showed the abode of former generations adapted with tasteless irreverence to the habits of descendants unenlightened by Pugin, or indifferent to the poetry of the past. The house had emerged suddenly upon Frank out of the gloomy waste land, for it was placed in a hollow, and sheltered from sight by a disorderly group of ragged, dismal, valetudinarian fir-trees, until an abrupt turn of the road cleared that screen, and left the desolate abode bare to the discontented eye. Frank dismounted; the man held his pony; and, after smoothing his cravat, the smart Etonian sauntered up to the door, and startled the solitude of the place with a loud peal from the modern brass knocker – a knock which instantly brought forth an astonished starling who had built under the eaves of the gable roof, and called up a cloud of sparrows, tomtits, and yellowhammers, who had been regaling themselves amongst the

litter of a slovenly farm-yard that lay in full sight to the right of the house, fenced off by a primitive, paintless wooden rail. In process of time a sow, accompanied by a thriving and inquisitive family, strolled up to the gate of the fence, and, leaning her nose on the lower bar of the gate, contemplated the visitor with much curiosity and some suspicion.

While Frank is still without, impatiently swingeing his white trousers with his whip, we will steal a hurried glance towards the respective members of the family within. Mr Leslie, the *pater familias*, is in a little room called his 'study,' to which he regularly retires every morning after breakfast, rarely reappearing till one o'clock, which is his unfashionable hour for dinner. In what mysterious occupations Mr Leslie passes those hours no one ever formed a conjecture. At the present moment he is seated before a little rickety bureau, one leg of which (being shorter than the other) is propped up by sundry old letters and scraps of newspapers; and the bureau is open, and reveals a great number of pigeon-holes and divisions, filled with various odds and ends, the collection of many years. In some of these compartments are bundles of letters, very yellow, and tied in packets with faded tape; in another, all by itself, is a fragment of plum-pudding stone, which Mr Leslie has picked up in his walks and considered a rare mineral. It is neatly labelled "Found in Hollow Lane, May 21st, 1824, by Maunder Slugge Leslie, Esq." The next division holds several bits of iron in the shape of nails, fragments of horseshoes, &c., which Mr Leslie had also met with

in his rambles, and, according to a harmless popular superstition, deemed it highly unlucky not to pick up, and, once picked up, no less unlucky to throw away. *Item*, in the adjoining pigeon-hole, a goodly collection of pebbles with holes in them, preserved for the same reason, in company with a crooked sixpence: *item*, neatly arranged in fanciful mosaics, several periwinkles, Blackamoor's teeth, (I mean the shell so called,) and other specimens of the conchiferous ingenuity of Nature, partly inherited from some ancestral spinster, partly amassed by Mr Leslie himself in a youthful excursion to the sea-side. There were the farm-bailiff's accounts, several files of bills, an old stirrup, three sets of knee and shoe buckles which had belonged to Mr Leslie's father, a few seals tied together by a shoe-string, a shagreen toothpick case, a tortoiseshell magnifying glass to read with, his eldest son's first copybooks, his second son's ditto, his daughter's ditto, and a lock of his wife's hair arranged in a true-lover's knot, framed and glazed. There were also a small mousetrap; a patent corkscrew, too good to be used in common; fragments of a silver tea spoon, that had, by natural decay, arrived at a dissolution of its parts; a small brown Holland bag, containing halfpence of various dates, as far back as Queen Anne, accompanied by two French *sous*, and a German *silber gros*; the which miscellany Mr Leslie magniloquently called "his coins," and had left in his will as a family heir-loom. There were many other curiosities of congenial nature and equal value – "*quænunc describere longum est.*" Mr Leslie was engaged at this time in what is termed "putting things

to rights" – an occupation he performed with exemplary care once a-week. This was his day; and he had just counted his coins, and was slowly tying them up again, when Frank's knock reached his ears.

Mr Maunder Slugge Leslie paused, shook his head as if incredulously, and was about to resume his occupation, when he was seized with a fit of yawning which prevented the bag being tied for full two minutes.

While such the employment of the study – let us turn to the recreations in the drawing-room, or rather parlour. A drawing-room there was on the first floor, with a charming look-out, not on the dreary fir-trees, but on the romantic undulating forest-land; but the drawing-room had not been used since the death of the last Mrs Leslie. It was deemed too good to sit in, except when there was company; there never being company, it was never sate in. Indeed, now the paper was falling off the walls with the damp, and the rats, mice, and moths – those "*edaces rerum*" – had eaten, between them, most of the chair-bottoms and a considerable part of the floor. Therefore the parlour was the sole general sitting-room; and being breakfasted in, dined and supped in, and, after supper, smoked in by Mr Leslie to the accompaniment of rum and water, it is impossible to deny that it had what is called "a smell" – a comfortable wholesome family smell – speaking of numbers, meals, and miscellaneous social habitation. There were two windows: one looked full on the fir-trees; the other on the farm-yard, with the pigsty closing

the view. Near the fir-tree window sate Mrs Leslie; before her, on a high stool, was a basket of the children's clothes that wanted mending. A work-table of rosewood inlaid with brass, which had been a wedding present, and was a costly thing originally, but in that peculiar taste which is vulgarly called "Brumagem," stood at hand: the brass had started in several places, and occasionally made great havoc on the children's fingers and Mrs Leslie's gown; in fact, it was the liveliest piece of furniture in the house, thanks to that petulant brass-work, and could not have been more mischievous if it had been a monkey. Upon the work-table lay a housewife and thimble, and scissors and skeins of worsted and thread, and little scraps of linen and cloth for patches. But Mrs Leslie was not actually working – she was preparing to work; she had been preparing to work for the last hour and a half. Upon her lap she supported a novel, by a lady who wrote much for a former generation, under the name of "Mrs Bridget Blue Mantle." She had a small needle in her left hand, and a very thick piece of thread in her right; occasionally she applied the end of the said thread to her lips, and then – her eyes fixed on the novel – made a blind vacillating attack at the eye of the needle. But a camel would have gone through it with quite as much ease. Nor did the novel alone engage Mrs Leslie's attention, for ever and anon she interrupted herself to scold the children; to inquire "what o'clock it was;" to observe that "Sarah would never suit," and to wonder why Mr Leslie would not see that the work-table was mended. Mrs Leslie had been rather a pretty

woman. In spite of a dress at once slatternly and economical, she has still the air of a lady – rather too much so, the hard duties of her situation considered. She is proud of the antiquity of her family on both sides; her mother was of the venerable stock of the Daudlers of Daudle Place, a race that existed before the Conquest. Indeed, one has only to read our earliest chronicles, and to glance over some of those long-winded moralising poems which delighted the thanes and ealdermen of old, in order to see that the Daudles must have been a very influential family before William the First turned the country topsy-turvy. While the mother's race was thus indubitably Saxon, the father's had not only the name but the peculiar idiosyncrasy of the Normans, and went far to establish that crotchet of the brilliant author of *Sybil, or the Two Nations*, as to the continued distinction between the conquering and conquered populations. Mrs Leslie's father boasted the name of Montfydget; doubtless of the same kith and kin as those great barons Montfichet, who once owned such broad lands and such turbulent castles. A high-nosed, thin, nervous, excitable progeny, those same Montfydgets, as the most troublesome Norman could pretend to be. This fusion of race was notable to the most ordinary physiognomist in the *physique* and in the *morale* of Mrs Leslie. She had the speculative blue eye of the Saxon, and the passionate high nose of the Norman; she had the musing do-nothingness of the Daudlers, and the reckless have-at-every-thingness of the Montfydgets. At Mrs Leslie's feet, a little girl with her hair about her ears, (and beautiful hair it was

too) was amusing herself with a broken-nosed doll. At the far end of the room, before a high desk, sate Frank's Eton schoolfellow, the eldest son. A minute or two before Frank's alarum had disturbed the tranquillity of the household, he had raised his eyes from the books on the desk, to glance at a very tattered copy of the Greek Testament, in which his brother Oliver had found a difficulty that he came to Randal to solve. As the young Etonian's face was turned to the light, your first impression, on seeing it, would have been melancholy but respectful interest – for the face had already lost the joyous character of youth – there was a wrinkle between the brows; and the lines that speak of fatigue, were already visible under the eyes and about the mouth; the complexion was sallow, the lips were pale. Years of study had already sown, in the delicate organisation, the seeds of many an infirmity and many a pain; but if your look had rested longer on that countenance, gradually your compassion might have given place to some feeling uneasy and sinister, a feeling akin to fear. There was in the whole expression so much of cold calm force, that it belied the debility of the frame. You saw there the evidence of a mind that was cultivated, and you felt that in that cultivation there was something formidable. A notable contrast to this countenance, prematurely worn and eminently intelligent, was the round healthy face of Oliver, with slow blue eyes, fixed hard on the penetrating orbs of his brother, as if trying with might and main to catch from them a gleam of that knowledge with which they shone clear and frigid as a star.

At Frank's knock, Oliver's slow blue eyes sparkled into animation, and he sprang from his brother's side. The little girl flung back the hair from her face, and stared at her mother with a look which spoke wonder and fright.

The young student knit his brows, and then turned wearily back to the books on his desk.

"Dear me," cried Mrs Leslie, "who can that possibly be? Oliver, come from the window, sir, this instant, you will be seen! Juliet, run – ring the bell – no, go to the stairs, and say, 'not at home.' Not at home on any account," repeated Mrs Leslie nervously, for the Montfydget blood was now in full flow.

In another minute or so, Frank's loud boyish voice was distinctly heard at the outer door.

Randal slightly started.

"Frank Hazeldean's voice," said he; "I should like to see him, mother."

"See him," repeated Mrs Leslie in amaze, "see him! – and the room in this state!"

Randal might have replied that the room was in no worse state than usual; but he said nothing. A slight flush came and went over his pale face; and then he leant his cheek on his hand, and compressed his lips firmly.

The outer door closed with a sullen inhospitable jar, and a slip-shod female servant entered with a card between her finger and thumb.

"Who is that for? – give it to me, Jenny," cried Mrs Leslie.

But Jenny shook her head, laid the card on the desk beside Randal, and vanished without saying a word.

"Oh look, Randal, look up," cried Oliver, who had again rushed to the window; "such a pretty gray pony!"

Randal did look up; nay, he went deliberately to the window, and gazed a moment on the high-mettled pony, and the well-dressed high-spirited rider. In that moment changes passed over Randal's countenance more rapidly than clouds over the sky in a gusty day. Now envy and discontent, with the curled lip and the gloomy scowl; now hope and proud self-esteem, with the clearing brow, and the lofty smile; and then all again became cold, firm, and close, as he walked back to his books, seated himself resolutely, and said half-aloud, —

"Well, KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!"

CHAPTER IV

Mrs Leslie came up in fidget and in fuss; she leant over Randal's shoulder and read the card. Written in pen and ink, with an attempt at imitation of printed Roman character, there appeared first, 'Mr Frank Hazeldean;' but just over these letters, and scribbled hastily and less legibly in pencil, was —

'Dear Leslie, – sorry you are out – come and see us —*Do!*'

"You will go, Randal?" said Mrs Leslie, after a pause.

"I am not sure."

"Yes, *you* can go; *you* have clothes like a gentleman; *you* can go anywhere, not like those children;" and Mrs Leslie glanced almost spitefully on poor Oliver's coarse threadbare jacket, and little Juliet's torn frock.

"What I have I owe at present to Mr Egerton, and I should consult his wishes; he is not on good terms with these Hazeldeans." Then glancing towards his brother, who looked mortified, he added with a strange sort of haughty kindness, "What I may have hereafter, Oliver, I shall owe to myself; and then, if I rise, I will raise my family."

"Dear Randal," said Mrs Leslie, fondly kissing him on the forehead, "what a good heart you have!"

"No, mother; my books don't tell me that it is a good heart that gets on in the world; it is a hard head," replied Randal with a rude and scornful candour. "But I can read no more just now;

come out, Oliver."

So saying, he slid from his mother's hand and left the room.

When Oliver joined him, Randal was already on the common; and, without seeming to notice his brother, he continued to walk quickly and with long strides in profound silence. At length he paused under the shade of an old oak, that, too old to be of value save for firewood, had escaped the axe. The tree stood on a knoll, and the spot commanded a view of the decayed house – the old dilapidated church – the dismal dreary village.

"Oliver," said Randal between his teeth, so that his voice had the sound of a hiss, "it was under this tree that I first resolved to – "

He paused.

"What, Randal?"

"Read hard; knowledge is power!"

"But you are so fond of reading."

"I!" cried Randal. "Do you think, when Wolsey and Thomas-à-Becket became priests, they were fond of telling their beads and pattering Aves? – I fond of reading!"

Oliver stared; the historical allusions were beyond his comprehension.

"You know," continued Randal, "that we Leslies were not always the beggarly poor gentlemen we are now. You know that there is a man who lives in Grosvenor Square, and is very rich – very. His riches come to him from a Leslie; that man is my patron, Oliver, and he is very good to me."

Randal's smile was withering as he spoke. "Come on," he said, after a pause – "come on." Again the walk was quicker, and the brothers were silent.

They came at length to a little shallow brook, across which some large stones had been placed at short intervals, so that the boys walked over the ford dryshod. "Will you pull me down that bough, Oliver?" said Randal abruptly, pointing to a tree. Oliver obeyed mechanically; and Randal, stripping the leaves, and snapping off the twigs, left a fork at the end; with this he began to remove the stepping-stones. "What are you about, Randal?" asked Oliver, wonderingly.

"We are on the other side of the brook now; and we shall not come back this way. We don't want the stepping-stones any more! – away with them!"

CHAPTER V

The morning after this visit of Frank Hazeldean's to Rood Hall, the Right Honourable Audley Egerton, member of parliament, privy councillor, and minister of a high department in the state – just below the rank of the cabinet – was seated in his library, awaiting the delivery of the post, before he walked down to his office. In the meanwhile, he sipped his tea, and glanced over the newspapers with that quick and half-disdainful eye with which your practical man in public life is wont to regard the abuse or the eulogium of the Fourth Estate.

There is very little likeness between Mr Egerton and his half-brother; none indeed, except that they are both of tall stature, and strong, sinewy, English build. But even in this last they do not resemble each other; for the Squire's athletic shape is already beginning to expand into that portly embonpoint which seems the natural development of contented men as they approach middle life. Audley, on the contrary, is inclined to be spare; and his figure, though the muscles are as firm as iron, has enough of the slender to satisfy metropolitan ideas of elegance. His dress – his look – his *tout ensemble*, are those of the London man. In the first, there is more attention to fashion than is usual amongst the busy members of the House of Commons; but then Audley Egerton had always been something more than a mere busy member of the House of Commons. He had always been a person

of mark in the best society, and one secret of his success in life has been his high reputation as 'a gentleman.'

As he now bends over the journals, there is an air of distinction in the turn of the well-shaped head, with the dark-brown hair – dark in spite of a reddish tinge – cut close behind, and worn away a little towards the crown, so as to give additional height to a commanding forehead. His profile is very handsome, and of that kind of beauty which imposes on men if it pleases women; and is therefore, unlike that of your mere pretty fellows, a positive advantage in public life. It is a profile with large features clearly cut, masculine, and somewhat severe. The expression of his face is not open, like the Squire's; nor has it the cold closeness which accompanies the intellectual character of young Leslie's; but it is reserved and dignified, and significant of self-control, as should be the physiognomy of a man accustomed to think before he speaks. When you look at him, you are not surprised to learn that he is not a florid orator nor a smart debater – he is a "weighty speaker." He is fairly read, but without any great range either of ornamental scholarship or constitutional lore. He has not much humour; but he has that kind of wit which is essential to grave and serious irony. He has not much imagination, nor remarkable subtlety in reasoning; but if he does not dazzle, he does not *bore*: he is too much the man of the world for that. He is considered to have sound sense and accurate judgment. Withal, as he now lays aside the journals, and his face relaxes its austerer lines, you will not be astonished to hear that he is

a man who is said to have been greatly beloved by women, and still to exercise much influence in drawing-rooms and boudoirs. At least no one was surprised when the great heiress Clementina Leslie, kinswoman and ward to Lord Lansmere – a young lady who had refused three earls and the heir-apparent to a dukedom – was declared by her dearest friends to be dying of love for Audley Egerton. It had been the natural wish of the Lansmeres that this lady should marry their son, Lord L'Estrange. But that young gentleman, whose opinions on matrimony partook of the eccentricity of his general character, could never be induced to propose, and had, according to the *on-dits* of town, been the principal party to make up the match between Clementina and his friend Audley; for the match required making-up, despite the predilections of the young heiress. Mr Egerton had had scruples of delicacy. He avowed, for the first time, that his fortune was much less than had been generally supposed, and he did not like the idea of owing all to a wife, however much he might esteem and admire her. L'Estrange was with his regiment abroad during the existence of these scruples; but by letters to his father, and to his cousin Clementina, he contrived to open and conclude negotiations, while he argued away Mr Egerton's objections; and, before the year in which Audley was returned for Lansmere had expired, he received the hand of the great heiress. The settlement of her fortune, which was chiefly in the funds, had been unusually advantageous to the husband; for though the capital was tied up so long as both survived – for the benefit of any children they

might have – yet, in the event of one of the parties dying without issue by the marriage, the whole passed without limitation to the survivor. In not only assenting to, but proposing this clause, Miss Leslie, if she showed a generous trust in Mr Egerton, inflicted no positive wrong on her relations; for she had none sufficiently near to her to warrant their claim to the succession. Her nearest kinsman, and therefore her natural heir, was Harley L'Estrange; and if he was contented, no one had a right to complain. The tie of blood between herself and the Leslies of Rood Hall was, as we shall see presently, extremely distant.

It was not till after his marriage that Mr Egerton took an active part in the business of the House of Commons. He was then at the most advantageous starting-point for the career of ambition. His words on the state of the country took importance from his stake in it. His talents found accessories in the opulence of Grosvenor Square, the dignity of a princely establishment, the respectability of one firmly settled in life, the reputation of a fortune in reality very large, and which was magnified by popular report into the revenues of a Crœsus. Audley Egerton succeeded in Parliament beyond the early expectations formed of him. He took, at first, that station in the House which it requires tact to establish, and great knowledge of the world to free from the charge of impracticability and crotchet, but which, once established, is peculiarly imposing from the rarity of its independence; that is to say, the station of the moderate man who belongs sufficiently to a party to obtain its support, but is yet

sufficiently disengaged from a party to make his vote and word, on certain questions, matter of anxiety and speculation.

Professing Toryism, (the word Conservative, which would have suited him better, was not then known,) he separated himself from the country party, and always avowed great respect for the opinions of the large towns. The epithet given to the views of Audley Egerton was "enlightened." Never too much in advance of the passion of the day, yet never behind its movement, he had that shrewd calculation of odds which a consummate mastery of the world sometimes bestows upon politicians – perceived the chances for and against a certain question being carried within a certain time, and nicked the question between wind and water. He was so good a barometer of that changeful weather called Public Opinion that he might have had a hand in the *Times* newspaper. He soon quarrelled, and purposely, with his Lansmere constituents – nor had he ever revisited that borough, perhaps because it was associated with unpleasant reminiscences in the shape of the Squire's epistolary trimmer, and in that of his own effigies which his agricultural constituents had burned in the corn-market. But the speeches which produced such indignation at Lansmere, had delighted one of the greatest of our commercial towns, which at the next general election honoured him with its representation. In those days, before the Reform Bill, great commercial towns chose men of high mark for their members; and a proud station it was for him who was delegated to speak the voice of the princely merchants of England.

Mrs Egerton survived her marriage but a few years; she left no children; two had been born, but died in their first infancy. The property of the wife, therefore, passed without control or limit to the husband.

Whatever might have been the grief of the widower, he disdained to betray it to the world. Indeed, Audley Egerton was a man who had early taught himself to conceal emotion. He buried himself in the country, none knew where, for some months: when he returned, there was a deep wrinkle on his brow; but no change in his habits and avocations, except that, shortly afterwards, he accepted office, and thus became more busy than ever.

Mr Egerton had always been lavish and magnificent in money matters. A rich man in public life has many claims on his fortune, and no one yielded to those claims with an air so regal as Audley Egerton. But amongst his many liberal actions, there was none which seemed more worthy of panegyric, than the generous favour he extended to the son of his wife's poor and distant kinsfolks, the Leslies of Rood Hall.

Some four generations back, there had lived a certain Squire Leslie, a man of large acres and active mind. He had cause to be displeased with his elder son, and though he did not disinherit him, he left half his property to a younger.

The younger had capacity and spirit, which justified the paternal provision. He increased his fortune; lifted himself into notice and consideration, by public services and a noble alliance. His descendants followed his example, and took rank among

the first commoners in England, till the last male, dying, left his sole heiress and representative in one daughter, Clementina, afterwards married to Mr Egerton.

Meanwhile the elder son of the forementioned squire had muddled and sotted away much of his share in the Leslie property; and, by low habits and mean society, lowered in repute his representation of the name.

His successors imitated him, till nothing was left to Randal's father, Mr Maunder Slugge Leslie, but the decayed house which was what the Germans call the *stamm schloss*, or "stem hall" of the race, and the wretched lands immediately around it.

Still, though all intercourse between the two branches of the family had ceased, the younger had always felt a respect for the elder, as the head of the house. And it was supposed that, on her deathbed, Mrs Egerton had recommended her impoverished namesakes and kindred to the care of her husband. For, when he returned to town after Mrs Egerton's death, Audley had sent to Mr Maunder Slugge Leslie the sum of £5000, which he said his wife, leaving no written will, had orally bequeathed as a legacy to that gentleman; and he requested permission to charge himself with the education of the eldest son.

Mr Maunder Slugge Leslie might have done great things for his little property with those £5000, or even, (kept in the three-per-cents) the interest would have afforded a material addition to his comforts. But a neighbouring solicitor having caught scent of the legacy, hunted it down into his own hands, on pretence

of having found a capital investment in a canal. And when the solicitor had got possession of the £5000, he went off with them to America.

Meanwhile Randal, placed by Mr Egerton at an excellent preparatory school, at first gave no signs of industry or talent; but just before he left it, there came to the school, as classical tutor, an ambitious young Oxford man; and his zeal, for he was a capital teacher, produced a great effect generally on the pupils, and especially on Randal Leslie. He talked to them much in private on the advantages of learning, and shortly afterwards he exhibited those advantages in his own person; for, having edited a Greek play with much subtle scholarship, his college, which some slight irregularities of his had displeased, recalled him to its venerable bosom by the presentation of a fellowship. After this he took orders, became a college tutor, distinguished himself yet more by a treatise on the Greek accent, got a capital living, and was considered on the high road to a bishopric. This young man, then, communicated to Randal the thirst for knowledge; and when the boy went afterwards to Eton, he applied with such earnestness and resolve that his fame soon reached the ears of Audley; and that person, who had the sympathy for talent, and yet more for purpose, which often characterises ambitious men, went to Eton to see him. From that time, Audley evinced great and almost fatherly interest in the brilliant Etonian; and Randal always spent with him some days in each vacation.

I have said that Egerton's conduct, with respect to this boy, was

more praiseworthy than most of those generous actions for which he was renowned, since to this the world gave no applause. What a man does within the range of his family connections, does not carry with it that *éclat* which invests a munificence exhibited on public occasions. Either people care nothing about it, or tacitly suppose it to be but his duty. It was true, too, as the Squire had observed, that Randal Leslie was even less distantly related to the Hazeldeans than to Mrs Egerton, since Randal's grandfather had actually married a Miss Hazeldean, (the highest worldly connection that branch of the family had formed since the great split I have commemorated.) But Audley Egerton never appeared aware of that fact. As he was not himself descended from the Hazeldeans, he never troubled himself about their genealogy; and he took care to impress it upon the Leslies that his generosity on their behalf was solely to be ascribed to his respect for his wife's memory and kindred. Still the Squire had felt as if his "distant brother" implied a rebuke on his own neglect of these poor Leslies, by the liberality Audley evinced towards them; and this had made him doubly sore when the name of Randal Leslie was mentioned. But the fact really was, that the Leslies of Rood had so shrunk out of all notice that the Squire had actually forgotten their existence, until Randal became thus indebted to his brother; and then he felt a pang of remorse that any one save himself, the head of the Hazeldeans, should lend a helping hand to the grandson of a Hazeldean.

But having thus, somewhat too tediously, explained the

position of Audley Egerton, whether in the world or in relation to his young *protegé*, I may now permit him to receive and to read his letters.

CHAPTER VI

Mr Egerton glanced over the pile of letters placed beside him, and first he tore up some, scarcely read, and threw them into the waste-basket. Public men have such odd out-of-the-way letters that their waste-baskets are never empty: letters from amateur financiers proposing new ways to pay off the National Debt; letters from America, (never free!) asking for autographs; letters from fond mothers in country villages, recommending some miracle of a son for a place in the king's service; letters from freethinkers in reproof of bigotry; letters from bigots in reproof of freethinking; letters signed Brutus Redivivus, containing the agreeable information that the writer has a dagger for tyrants, if the Danish claims are not forthwith adjusted; letters signed Matilda or Caroline, stating that Caroline or Matilda has seen the public man's portrait at the Exhibition, and that a heart sensible to its attractions may be found at No. – Piccadilly; letters from beggars, impostors, monomaniacs, speculators, jobbers – all food for the waste-basket.

From the correspondence thus winnowed, Mr Egerton first selected those on business, which he put methodically together in one division of his pocket-book; and secondly, those of a private nature, which he as carefully put into another. Of these last there were but three – one from his steward, one from Harley L'Estrange, one from Randal Leslie. It was his custom to answer

his correspondence at his office; and to his office, a few minutes afterwards, he slowly took his way. Many a passenger turned back to look again at the firm figure, which, despite the hot summer day, was buttoned up to the throat; and the black frock-coat thus worn, well became the erect air, and the deep full chest of the handsome senator. When he entered Parliament Street, Audley Egerton was joined by one of his colleagues, also on his way to the cares of office.

After a few observations on the last debate, this gentleman said —

"By the way, can you dine with me next Saturday, to meet Lansmere? He comes up to town to vote for us on Monday."

"I had asked some people to dine with me," answered Egerton, "but I will put them off. I see Lord Lansmere too seldom, to miss any occasion to meet a man whom I respect so much."

"So seldom! True, he is very little in town; but why don't you go and see him in the country? Good shooting – pleasant old-fashioned house."

"My dear Westbourne, his house is '*nimium vicina Cremonæ*,' close to a borough in which I have been burned in effigy."

"Ha – ha – yes – I remember you first came into Parliament for that snug little place; but Lansmere himself never found fault with your votes, did he?"

"He behaved very handsomely, and said he had not presumed to consider me his mouthpiece; and then, too, I am so intimate with L'Estrange."

"Is that queer fellow ever coming back to England?"

"He comes, generally every year, for a few days, just to see his father and mother, and then goes back to the Continent."

"I never meet him."

"He comes in September or October, when you, of course, are not in town, and it is in town that the Lansmeres meet him."

"Why does not he go to them?"

"A man in England but once a year, and for a few days, has so much to do in London, I suppose."

"Is he as amusing as ever?"

Egerton nodded.

"So distinguished as he might be!" continued Lord Westbourne.

"So distinguished as he is!" said Egerton formally; "an officer selected for praise, even in such fields as Quatre Bras and Waterloo; a scholar, too, of the finest taste; and as an accomplished gentleman, matchless!"

"I like to hear one man praise another so warmly in these ill-natured days," answered Lord Westbourne. "But still, though L'Estrange is doubtless all you say, don't you think he rather wastes his life – living abroad?"

"And trying to be happy, Westbourne? Are you sure it is not we who waste our lives? But I can't stay to hear your answer. Here we are at the door of my prison."

"On Saturday, then?"

"On Saturday. Good day."

For the next hour, or more, Mr Egerton was engaged on the affairs of the state. He then snatched an interval of leisure, (while awaiting a report, which he had instructed a clerk to make him,) in order to reply to his letters. Those on public business were soon despatched; and throwing his replies aside, to be sealed by a subordinate hand, he drew out the letters which he had put apart as private.

He attended first to that of his steward: the steward's letter was long, the reply was contained in three lines. Pitt himself was scarcely more negligent of his private interests and concerns than Audley Egerton – yet, withal, Audley Egerton was said by his enemies to be an egotist.

The next letter he wrote was to Randal, and that, though longer, was far from prolix: it ran thus —

> "Dear Mr Leslie, – I appreciate your delicacy in consulting me, whether you should accept Frank Hazeldean's invitation to call at the Hall. Since you are asked, I can see no objection to it. I should be sorry if you appeared to force yourself there; and for the rest, as a general rule, I think a young man who has his own way to make in life had better avoid all intimacy with those of his own age who have no kindred objects nor congenial pursuits.
>
> "As soon as this visit is paid, I wish you to come to London. The report I receive of your progress at Eton renders it unnecessary, in my judgment, that you should return there. If your father has no objection, I propose that

you should go to Oxford at the ensuing term. Meanwhile, I have engaged a gentleman who is a fellow of Baliol, to read with you; he is of opinion, judging only by your high repute at Eton, that you may at once obtain a scholarship in that college. If you do so, I shall look upon your career in life as assured.

"Your affectionate friend, and sincere well-wisher,

A. E."

The reader will remark that, in this letter, there is a certain tone of formality. Mr Egerton does not call his *protegé* "dear Randal," as would seem natural, but coldly and stiffly, "Dear Mr Leslie." He hints, also, that the boy has his own way to make in life. Is this meant to guard against too sanguine notions of inheritance, which his generosity may have excited?

The letter to Lord L'Estrange was of a very different kind from the others. It was long, and full of such little scraps of news and gossip as may interest friends in a foreign land; it was written gaily, and as with a wish to cheer his friend; you could see that it was a reply to a melancholy letter; and in the whole tone and spirit there was an affection, even to tenderness, of which those who most liked Audley Egerton would have scarcely supposed him capable. Yet, notwithstanding, there was a kind of constraint in the letter, which perhaps only the fine tact of a woman would detect. It had not that *abandon*, that hearty self-outpouring, which you might expect would characterise the letters of two such friends, who had been boys at school together, and which did breathe indeed in all the abrupt rambling sentences of his

correspondent. But where was the evidence of the constraint? Egerton is off-hand enough where his pen runs glibly through paragraphs that relate to others; it is simply that he says nothing about himself – that he avoids all reference to the inner world of sentiment and feeling. But perhaps, after all, the man has no sentiment and feeling! How can you expect that a steady personage in practical life, whose mornings are spent in Downing Street, and whose nights are consumed in watching Government bills through a committee, can write in the same style as an idle dreamer amidst the pines of Ravenna or on the banks of Como.

Audley had just finished this epistle, such as it was, when the attendant in waiting announced the arrival of a deputation from a provincial trading town, the members of which deputation he had appointed to meet at two o'clock. There was no office in London at which deputations were kept waiting less than at that over which Mr Egerton presided.

The deputation entered – some score or so of middle-aged, comfortable-looking persons, who nevertheless had their grievance – and considered their own interests, and those of the country, menaced by a certain clause in a bill brought in by Mr Egerton.

The Mayor of the town was the chief spokesman, and he spoke well – but in a style to which the dignified official was not accustomed. It was a slap-dash style – unceremonious, free, and easy – an American style. And, indeed, there was something altogether in the appearance and bearing of the Mayor which

savoured of residence in the Great Republic. He was a very handsome man, but with a look sharp and domineering – the look of a man who did not care a straw for president or monarch, and who enjoyed the liberty to speak his mind, and "wallop his own nigger!"

His fellow-burghers evidently regarded him with great respect; and Mr Egerton had penetration enough to perceive that Mr Mayor must be a rich man, as well as an eloquent one, to have overcome those impressions of soreness or jealousy which his tone was calculated to create in the self-love of his equals.

Mr Egerton was far too wise to be easily offended by mere manner; and, though he stared somewhat haughtily when he found his observations actually pooh-poohed, he was not above being convinced. There was much sense and much justice in Mr Mayor's arguments, and the statesman civilly promised to take them into full consideration.

He then bowed out the deputation; but scarcely had the door closed before it opened again, and Mr Mayor presented himself alone, saying aloud to his companions in the passage, "I forgot something I had to say to Mr Egerton; wait below for me."

"Well, Mr Mayor," said Audley, pointing to a seat, "what else would you suggest?"

The Mayor looked round to see that the door was closed; and then, drawing his chair close to Mr Egerton's, laid his forefinger on that gentleman's arm, and said, "I think I speak to a man of the world, sir."

Mr Egerton bowed, and made no reply by word, but he gently removed his arm from the touch of the forefinger.

Mr Mayor. – "You observe, sir, that I did not ask the members whom we return to Parliament to accompany us. Do better without 'em. You know they are both in Opposition – out-and-outers."

Mr Egerton. – "It is a misfortune which the Government cannot remember, when the question is whether the trade of the town itself is to be served or injured."

Mr Mayor. – "Well, I guess you speak handsome, sir. But you'd be glad to have two members to support Ministers after the next election."

Mr Egerton, smiling. – "Unquestionably, Mr Mayor."

Mr Mayor. – "And I can do it, Mr Egerton. I may say I have the town in my pocket; so I ought, I spend a great deal of money in it. Now, you see, Mr Egerton, I have passed a part of my life in a land of liberty – the United States – and I come to the point when I speak to a man of the world. I'm a man of the world myself, sir. And if so be the Government will do something for me, why, I'll do something for the Government. Two votes for a free and independent town like ours – that's something, isn't it?"

Mr Egerton, taken by surprise. – "Really, I – "

Mr Mayor, advancing his chair still nearer, and interrupting the official. – "No nonsense, you see, on one side or the other. The fact is that I've taken it into my head that I should be knighted. You may well look surprised, Mr Egerton – trumpery

thing enough, I dare say; still, every man has his weakness, and I should like to be Sir Richard. Well, if you can get me made Sir Richard, you may just name your two members for the next election – that is, if they belong to your own set, enlightened men, up to the times. That's speaking fair and manful, isn't it?"

Mr Egerton, drawing himself up. – "I am at a loss to guess why you should select me, sir, for this very extraordinary proposition."

Mr Mayor, nodding good-humouredly. – "Why, you see, I don't go all along with the Government; you're the best of the bunch. And maybe you'd like to strengthen your own party. This is quite between you and me, you understand; honour's a jewel!"

Mr Egerton, with great gravity. – "Sir, I am obliged by your good opinion; but I agree with my colleagues in all the great questions that affect the government of the country, and – "

Mr Mayor, interrupting him. – "Ah, of course, you must say so; very right. But I guess things would go differently if you were Prime Minister. However, I have another reason for speaking to you about my little job. You see you were member for Lansmere once, and I think you came in but by two majority, eh?"

Mr Egerton. – "I know nothing of the particulars of that election; I was not present."

Mr Mayor. – "No; but, luckily for you, two relatives of mine were, and they voted for you. Two votes, and you came in by two! Since then, you have got into very snug quarters here, and I think we have a claim on you – "

Mr Egerton. – "Sir, I acknowledge no such claim; I was and

am a stranger to Lansmere; and, if the electors did me the honour to return me to Parliament, it was in compliment rather to – "

Mr Mayor, again interrupting the official. – "Rather to Lord Lansmere, you were going to say; unconstitutional doctrine that, I fancy. Peer of the realm. But, never mind, I know the world; and I'd ask Lord Lansmere to do my affair for me, only I hear he is as proud as Lucifer."

Mr Egerton, in great disgust, and settling his papers before him. – "Sir, it is not in my department to recommend to his Majesty candidates for the honour of knighthood, and it is still less in my department to make bargains for seats in Parliament."

Mr Mayor. – "Oh, if that's the case, you'll excuse me; I don't know much of the etiquette in these matters. But I thought that, if I put two seats in your hands, for your own friends, you might contrive to take the affair into your department, whatever it was. But, since you say you agree with your colleagues, perhaps it comes to the same thing. Now, you must not suppose I want to sell the town, and that I can change and chop my politics for my own purpose. No such thing! I don't like the sitting members; I'm all for progressing, but they go *too* much a-head for me; and, since the Government is disposed to move a little, why I'd as lief support them as not. But, in common gratitude, you see, (added the Mayor, coaxingly,) I ought to be knighted! I can keep up the dignity, and do credit to his Majesty."

Mr Egerton, without looking up from his papers. – "I can only refer you, sir, to the proper quarter."

Mr Mayor, impatiently. – "Proper quarter! Well, since there is so much humbug in this old country of ours, that one must go through all the forms and get at the job regularly, just tell me whom I ought to go to."

Mr Egerton, beginning to be amused as well as indignant. – "If you want a knighthood, Mr Mayor, you must ask the Prime Minister; if you want to give the Government information relative to seats in Parliament, you must introduce yourself to Mr – the Secretary of the Treasury."

Mr Mayor. – "And if I go to the last chap, what do you think he'll say?"

Mr Egerton, the amusement preponderating over the indignation. – "He will say, I suppose, that you must not put the thing in the light in which you have put it to me; that the Government will be very proud to have the confidence of yourself and your brother electors; and that a gentleman like you, in the proud position of Mayor, may well hope to be knighted on some fitting occasion. But that you must not talk about the knighthood just at present, and must confine yourself to converting the unfortunate political opinions of the town."

Mr Mayor. – "Well, I guess that chap there would want to do me! Not quite so green, Mr Egerton. Perhaps I'd better go at once to the fountain-head. How d'ye think the Premier would take it?"

Mr Egerton, the indignation preponderating over the amusement. – "Probably just as I am about to do."

Mr Egerton rang the bell; the attendant appeared.

"Show Mr Mayor the way out," said the Minister.

The Mayor turned round sharply, and his face was purple. He walked straight to the door; but, suffering the attendant to precede him along the corridor, he came back with a rapid stride, and, clenching his hands, and, with a voice thick with passion, cried, "Some day or other I will make you smart for this, as sure as my name's Dick Avenel!"

"Avenel!" repeated Egerton, recoiling, "Avenel!"

But the Mayor was gone.

Audley fell into a deep and musing reverie which seemed gloomy, and lasted till the attendant announced that the horses were at the door.

He then looked up, still abstractedly, and saw his letter to Harley L'Estrange open on the table. He drew it towards him, and wrote, "A man has just left me, who calls himself Aven – " in the middle of the name his pen stopped. "No, no," muttered the writer, "what folly to reopen the old wounds there," and he carefully erased the words.

Audley Egerton did not ride in the Park that day, as was his wont, but dismissed his groom; and, turning his horse's head towards Westminster Bridge, took his solitary way into the country. He rode at first slowly, as if in thought; then fast, as if trying to escape from thought. He was later than usual at the House that evening, and he looked pale and fatigued. But he had to speak, and he spoke well.

THE RISE, POWER, AND POLITICS OF PRUSSIA. [1]

If there is such a thing in diplomacy as a natural ally, Prussia is the natural ally of England. Each possesses exactly what the other wants – the power of Prussia consisting in an immense army, the power of England in an unrivalled fleet: for though the British troops have shown themselves at least equal to any troops in the world, the genius of the nation looks chiefly to naval pre-eminence; and though, in the course of time, Prussia may be in possession of naval honours, nothing can be clearer than that its present strength depends on its soldiery.

The close alliance of England with Prussia is now a century old. We find the great Lord Chatham taking the most open interest in the successes of Frederick II., and establishing the principle that the independence of Prussia is essential to the balance of Europe. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the north of Germany was divided among a cluster of petty sovereignties – of all forms of a national system the surest to foster political intrigues, to invite the intermeddling of foreigners, the one to offer the strongest inducements to invasion,

[1] *Memoirs and Papers of Sir Andrew Mitchell, K.B.*, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from the Court of Great Britain to the Court of Prussia, from 1756 to 1771. By Andrew Bisset, of Lincoln's Inn, Barrister-at-Law. 2 Vols. Chapman & Hall, London.

and to provide the feeblest means of defence. The formidable power of France, within twenty miles of England, must always fix the eye of the English statesman; and no more essential operation for our national tranquillity could be conceived than the solid establishment of a kingdom on the northern frontier of France, which might make that proverbially impetuous and ambitious nation aware, that an attempt to assault England could not be made without incurring the hazard of an assault on her own most exposed frontier.

But another power had arisen to render the balance of Europe still more precarious. Russia, at the beginning of the century, known but as a land of semi-barbarism, had suddenly started into a massive force, which threatened the absorption of Germany. Possessing the highest advantages for a great military empire, with harbours commanding the North, a population of sixty millions, a territory almost boundless and almost unassailable, and a government which, under all the changes of individual character in its princes, has retained in its policy the same character of continual progress, of restless interference in European politics, and of bold ambition – Russia must, in all the views of the English statesman, assume an interest of the most pressing order. To interpose an iron barrier to the ambition of Russia necessarily became the principle of English policy, and the English politician naturally looked for that barrier in the vigorous administration and steady strength of the resources of Prussia.

The eighteenth century may be called the Century of Sovereigns. There was no period, before or since, in which so many remarkable personages sat on the thrones of Europe – William III., Louis XIV., Charles XII., the Czar Peter, Maria Theresa of Austria, Catherine II., and Frederick II. of Prussia – each possessed either of great intellectual or great political qualities; all capable of distinction, if they had been born in the humbler conditions of mankind; but all developing, in the duties and labours of thrones, those qualities in a degree which made them, for their day, the great *impulses* of Europe, and which have placed them in an immovable rank among the high recollections of history.

But, to the Englishman, whether politician or philosopher, Prussia is the most important, from its position, the nature of its connexion with our country, the singularity of its origin, and the especial dependence of its early advance to sovereignty on the vigour of an individual mind.

Gibbon remarks that the oldest royal genealogy of Europe scarcely ascends to the eighth century. The genealogy of the Prussian throne, whether by the zeal of the herald, or the truth of the historian, nearly reaches that cloudy period. Its pedigree is dubiously traced up to the founder of the great Swabian family of Hohenzollern, of whom the first supposed ancestor was a Count Thalasso of Zollern. The family then either fell into obscurity, or rested in contentment with its ancestral possessions, until the thirteenth century, when it started on

the national eye as the Burgraves of Nurnberg. But it again slumbered for eight generations, until the difficulties of the Emperor Sigismund drove him to apply to the resources of the family, then probably grown rich, as the chief personages of an opulent German community. The service was repaid by the Viceroyalty of Brandenburg, and the subsequent donation of the actual territory, with the title of Elector, and the office of archchamberlain of the empire.

The imperial gratitude probably continued to be reminded of its duties by fresh loans, for the electorate continued to receive frequent additions of territory, until, early in the seventeenth century, the annexation of the duchy of Prussia placed the Elector in an imposing rank among the dependant princes of the Continent. In the middle of this century a man of distinguished ability, fortunately for Prussia, ascended the electoral throne. Germany was then ravaged by the memorable Thirty Years' War. Frederick the Great afterwards expressed the embarrassments of the new reign in a few pithy words, as was his custom: "My great ancestor," said this graphic describer, "was a prince without territory, an elector without power, and an ally without a friend."

But talent and time are the true elements of success in every condition of life. By economy the Elector restored his finances; by common sense he reclaimed his half-savage subjects; and by sound policy he continued to augment his dominions, without doing violence to his neighbours. The peace of Westphalia, (1648,) which established the imperial system,

gave him the additional importance attached to the possession of the archbishopric of Magdeburg, of Halberstadt, and of the actual sovereignty of ducal Prussia, hitherto held as a Polish fief.

But those were the victories of peace; he was at length forced to exhibit his qualities for war. In 1674, as a prince of the empire, he was compelled to furnish his contingent to its army against France. Louis XIV., in revenge, let loose the Swedes in Pomerania to invade Brandenburg. The reputation of the Swedish troops had risen to the highest rank in the Thirty Years' War, and they were regarded as all but invincible. The Prussian Elector, justly alarmed at this new peril of his dominions, appealed to his allies. But German alliances (in those days at least) were slippery, and German succours are habitually slow. Wearied by their delays, the Elector determined to act for himself. Breaking up from Franconia, he transferred his little army of eight thousand men suddenly to Magdeburg. The Swedes, encamped on the Havel, and contemptuous of Prussian strategy, took no trouble to ascertain his movements. The whole expedition was conducted with equal vigour and dexterity. On his arrival in Magdeburg, the gates were kept shut for four-and-twenty hours: thus all intelligence to the enemy was cut off. At nightfall he sallied forth; by daybreak he reached and assaulted the Swedish headquarters, took their baggage and cannon, and hunted the troops from post to post until their dispersion was total.

This battle was one of the instances in which the most

important results have followed from slight events. The battle would have been in later times scarcely more than an affair of advanced guards, for the Swedes had but eight thousand, and the Prussians engaged were but five thousand five hundred. But, to have beaten the most distinguished soldiery in Europe, to have surprised the most disciplined, and to have gained the victory with inferior numbers, instantly drew the eyes of Europe on the Elector. His dominions were subjected to no further insult; the character of the Prussian army was raised; and Prussia made the first actual stride to northern supremacy.

This eminent man died in 1688, after a career which earned the panegyric even of his fastidious descendant, Frederick II., who thus described him, almost a hundred years after: —

> "He possessed all the qualities which can make a man great, and Providence afforded him abundant opportunities of developing them. He gave proofs of prudence at an age when youth, in general, exhibits nothing but errors. He never abused the heroic virtues, but applied his valour to the defence of his dominions, and the assistance of his allies. He had a sound judgment, which made him a great statesman; and was active and affable, which made him a good sovereign. His soul was the seat of virtue; prosperity could not inflate, nor adversity depress it. He was the restorer of his country, the arbiter of his equals, and the founder of the power of Brandenburg. *His life was his panegyric.*"

Frederick, the eldest son of the great elector, by his marriage

with a sister of George I. then Elector of Hanover, became connected with English politics; sent six thousand men to the assistance of the Prince of Orange in his invasion of England; joined the Allies, with twenty thousand men, in revenging the havoc of the Palatinate; and, in the Grand Alliance of 1691, sent fifteen thousand troops to join the army of William III.

But Prussia was continually progressive, and in 1700 she was to make that advance in rank of which nations are as ambitious as their princes. In this year Prussia obtained from the Emperor the long-coveted title of kingdom; and the monarch, as Frederick I., took his place among European sovereigns. He died in 1713, and was succeeded by the prince-royal, Frederick-William. The character of the deceased monarch was, long after, given with epigrammatic contemptuousness by Frederick II.

> "In person short and deformed, with a haughty manner and a commonplace countenance, violent from temper, mild from carelessness, he confounded vanities with acts of greatness, and was fonder of show than of utility. He sold the blood of his subjects to England and Holland, as the Tartars sell their cattle to the Podolian butchers for slaughter; he oppressed the poor to make the rich fatter still. He wished to pledge the royal domains to buy the Pitt diamond; and he sold to the Allies twenty thousand men, to have it said that he kept thirty thousand."

Royal extravagance is never pardoned, and the memory of this princely spendthrift prepared popularity for his rigid successor.

The *Memoirs of the Margravine of Bareith* have thrown that successor into ridicule; and it must be acknowledged, that his early acts were calculated to throw all the courtiers of Europe into mingled astonishment and indignation. Immediately on his accession, he ordered the grand-marshal of the palace to bring him the list of the royal establishment. The king took a pen, and crossed out the whole. The grand-marshal, in horror at this sweeping style of reform, lost his speech, and fled from the royal presence. Meeting an officer in the antechamber, the latter, seeing his countenance of consternation, asked what had happened. The grand-marshal showed him the list, and the officer translated it for the benefit of the levée – "Gentlemen, our good master is dead, and the new king sends you all to the d – l!"

The twenty-six trumpeters, who supplied the place of conversation at the royal dinners, were scattered among the regiments. The hundred Swiss – the decorated slaves, whom Switzerland, with all her boast of freedom, was in the habit of sending to play the menial to the European sovereigns – were dismissed to do duty in the ranks of the line. The hoards of pearls and diamonds, and gold and silver plate, which it had been the pride and the folly of the late king to amass, were sold to pay his debts and to raise troops.

The old court had been overrun with French fashions, the French language – everything French. The king set about reforming those anti-national propensities: he dressed the regimental provosts, or army floggers and executioners, in the

full French costume, to render it ridiculous; the embroidered coats and huge wigs of his privy councillors and chamberlains he ordered to be worn by the court fool on gala days.

But the discipline of the Prussian army was the peculiar distinction of this singular reign. Of all European nations, Prussia is the one to which an army is the most important. The exposed condition of a long and irregular territory, wholly without a natural frontier, with neither mountain range nor bordering river for its protection, and surrounded by warlike and powerful nations, required an army, to keep it in existence. The Alps or Pyrenees, the Rhine and the Danube, the Dniester and the Po, might protect their several countries from invasion; but the levels of Prussia required a force always on foot, prompt and prepared. To *frontierless* Prussia a powerful army was as peculiarly essential as a Royal Navy is to the British *Isles*. In all the early difficulties of his predecessor's debt, the king had raised the Prussian army to upwards of forty thousand men; and, before he died, his muster-roll amounted to nearly eighty thousand of the finest troops on the Continent. It gives a curious contrast of the nature of belligerency in the nineteenth century, to know that the Prussian army now reckons three hundred thousand men, and that, on the first rumour of war, it would probably number half-a-million.

The new school of finance makes inquiries of this kind important; for since every country must be prepared to defend itself, and troops require to be paid, the whole question of

national safety depends on the national force. The Manchester financiers tell us that reduction is the true secret of strength, and that fleets and armies are only provocatives to war. The older school held, that to be prepared for war was the best security for peace; that the reduction which extinguished the national force was only an invitation to insult; and that it was a wiser policy to give the soldier his pay for our protection, than to give an invader every shilling we were worth in the shape of plunder. Frederick-William was of the old school; and, by showing that he was always prepared for war, he secured peace, even in the most quarrelsome of all countries, Germany, through a reign of twenty-seven years. The organisation of the Prussian army was even then a phenomenon in Europe: its provision, its government, its recruiting, and, above all, its manœuvring, attracted universal admiration, and doubled the impression of its numbers on the general mind.

These facts have an interest beyond their mere effect at the time; they are the testimonials of talent, evidences of the power of mind, encouragements to original conception, substantial declarations that men should always try to invigorate, improve, and advance inventions, however apparently perfect. There is always a field beyond.

Why a German duchy was suffered thus to rise into European influence – to extend from a province into a territory, now containing sixteen millions of souls, and to change from a dependent electorate into a kingdom, now acting as the

barrier of Northern Germany against the gigantic monarchy of St Petersburg – is a question which ought to be asked by the politician, and which may well excite the study of the philosopher.

The true value of history consists in developing *principles*. Memoirs and biographies, the anecdotes of vigorous minds, and the narratives of leading events, all have their obvious value; but history has a distinction of its own. It is more than a tissue of striking recollections; it is superior to a fine arrangement of facts; it is the spirit of great facts, a *system* displaying the *science* of influential things.

Events are, of course, its material, but it is only as the materials of architecture furnish the means of erecting the palace or the temple: the mind of the architect must supply the beauty and grandeur of the edifice. Without that constructive genius, history is only a compilation.

It is certainly in no superstition, that we strongly incline to account for the rise of Prussia in the necessity of a protection for Protestantism in Northern Germany. The whole tenor of its annals substantiates the conception. Prussia, at an early period, felt a singular sympathy with the Protestantism of Germany. The especial scene of persecution was Poland, where neither royal compact nor popular declaration was able to secure the faith of the Scriptures from the outrages of Romanism. The Treaty of Oliva, in 1660, had, like the Edict of Nantes, been the charter of Protestantism; but, like the Edict, it had been broken, and the

life of the Polish Protestant was a scene of suffering. The "Great Elector" had signalised his Christianity, and perhaps raised his country, by giving protection to the sufferers. His descendant, Frederick-William, followed his honourable example. When the Starost Umruh, in 1715, was sentenced to have his tongue cut out, and to be beheaded, for his Protestant opinions, he fled to Prussia, and was protected by Frederick-William. The Diet of Grodno commenced a persecution by declaring the Polish Protestants to have forfeited both their civil and religious privileges. Frederick-William answered this act of infidelity and tyranny by a royal remonstrance to the diet, and by a letter to the King of England, advocating the persecuted cause. In the Treaty of Stockholm, in 1720, he inserted a stipulation, binding the Swedish Government to make common cause with the Protestants of Germany. In Western Germany, persecution had long exhibited its irrational policy, and exercised its cruel power. At Heidelberg, Popish advisers and confessors had poisoned the mind of the Elector, and acts of violence had taken place. The Protestants, in their distress, applied to Prussia. The King, in conjunction with the British monarch, and the Elector of Hesse, adopted their defence; issuing, at the same time, the effective menace that, if the persecution in the Palatinate were not stopped, he would shut up every Romish chapel, convent, and institution, and sequestrate every dollar of their revenue in Prussia, while the persecution lasted.

The same impulse acted throughout the century. Frederick

II. was an infidel: the national policy continued unchanged. As a Voltairist, he was an ostentatious advocate of toleration, which, though in both Frederick and his teacher the work of the scoffer, yet produced the effect of forbidding all religious tyranny. Even the war for the possession of Silesia, though difficult to be explained in its question of right, had the result of weakening the Popish influence in Germany. Maria-Theresa was the prop of Popery, while Frederick II. was universally regarded as the champion of Protestantism; and his final success, by enfeebling the supremacy of the empress, showed that a kingdom of Protestantism possessed the means of resisting an empire of Popery hitherto supposed irresistible. If Prussia had been crushed in that contest, the *prestige* of Popery would again have risen to its old height in Germany, Protestantism would unquestionably have felt the blow to its foundations, and the probable consequence would have been to throw the Continent at the feet of Rome.

Frederick the Great was born on the 24th of January 1712, in the palace at Berlin. At his baptism, the sponsors were at least sufficiently numerous and stately; they were the Emperor Charles VI., the Dowager-empress, the Czar Peter, the States-general of Holland, the Canton of Berne, the Electant Prince of Hanover, and the Dowager-duchess of Mecklenburg.

Frederick was born Prince of Prussia and Orange; but after the cession of Orange to France, by the Peace of Utrecht, the name was given up, though the Crown of Prussia retained the

title and the arms.

The popular feeling, on this occasion, was connected with a simple yet curious circumstance. An American Aloe, which had been forty-four years in the royal garden, suddenly threw out a profusion of blossoms. Thousands flocked to see this fine production of nature, which, on a stem thirty-one feet high, exhibited 7277 blossoms! The multitude gave it an almost mystic meaning, and conceived the plant (which, in all this profusion of beauty, was decaying) to be emblematic of the failing health of the old king, and the new prospects of honour under his grandson. Poems and pictures of the Aloe were spread through the kingdom. The omen was as imaginative as one of the poetic superstitions of Greece, and the imagination was realised.

The education of the future possessor of a sceptre is an important topic. In Germany the education of the higher orders generally embraces a sort of encyclopædia of accomplishments. The young heir to the throne thus learned music and painting, in addition to mathematics and languages. In music he became a proficient, and with his favourite instrument, the flute, could sustain his part in an orchestra. But, the chief object of his education, as that of all the German princes, being military, he learned all of the art of war that could be taught; the perfection of the art he was yet to learn in the field, and give evidence of his acquirement only in his memorable victories.

One misfortune of this education possessed and perverted him through life. Germany was, in literature, but a province

of France. The licentiousness of French sentiment had tempted the rising generation to abandon the manly feelings of the Reformers. It is to the honour of our country that the principles of true religion, like those of true liberty, then found their defence within her borders; and in the existing, and still darker, period of German infidelity, the battle is still fought by the theology of England.

Adversity seems essential to the education of all great princes. Frederick was not without his share of this stern pupillage. The eccentricities of his royal father, his own waywardness, and the roughness of court discipline, produced continual collisions in the royal family, and the prince remained for some years in a kind of honourable exile from Berlin. During this period, however, he cultivated his powerful understanding to its height; but made the singular mistake of believing that he was born for a hermit, a sentimentalist, and a writer of French verses. In this fantastic spirit, he gave his immediate friends names from Greece and Rome; and was surrounded by Hephæstion, Diophanes, Cæsarion, and Quintus Icilius. Even the place of his retirement, Rheinsberg, was transformed into Remusberg, to meet a tradition that Remus was not killed by Romulus, but, flying from Rome, had settled in the spot which was afterwards to teach sentiment and solitude to the Prince of Prussia.

Those are traits worth remembering in the history of human nature. Who could have conceived the most daring of warriors, the most subtle of politicians, and the most ambitious of kings,

in the writer of letters such as these? —

> "My house, indeed, is not a place for those who are fond of noisy pleasures; but are not tranquillity, quiet, and the search for truth, to be preferred to the giddy and turbulent diversions of this world?
>
> "On the 25th I am going to Amaltheu, my beloved garden at Ruppin. I am quite impatient to see again my vines, my cherries, and my melons; there, free from all useless cares, I shall live entirely for myself. My whole soul is now intent on philosophy. It renders me incomparable services, and I am deeply indebted to it. My spirit is less agitated by impetuous emotions. I repress the first working of my passions, and I never make a choice until I have maturely considered it."

All his letters are in the same strain of studious quiet, of steady self-control, and of systematic love of retirement. He sometimes even turns enthusiast, and he thus writes to Voltaire, *then* known chiefly as the author of the *Henriade*– (his worse celebrity, as the impugner of all religion, was still at a distance.) In a letter, in 1738, he addresses the Frenchman in this rapturous effusion: —

> "At Rheinsberg, to be perfectly happy, we want only a Voltaire. But, though you live far from us, still you are in our midst. Your portrait adorns my library; it hangs over the bookcase which contains our Golden Fleece, immediately above your works, and opposite to the place where I generally sit, that I may always have it in my view. I might almost say, that your picture is to me as the statue of Memnon, which, when the sun's rays fell on it, emitted

harmonious sounds, and imparted inspiration to the mind of every one who looked upon it."

In another letter he writes —

"In pagan antiquity, men offered to the gods the first fruits of the harvest and of the vintage… In the Romish church, they devote not only the firstborn, not only the younger sons, but whole kingdoms, as we see in the instance of St Louis, who renounced his in favour of the Virgin Mary. For my part, I have no first fruits of the earth, no children, and no kingdom to devote; but I devote to you the first fruits of my muse in the year 1739. Were I a pagan, I would address you by the name of Apollo; were I a Papist, I might have chosen you for my patron saint, or my confessor; but, being none of these, I am content to admire you as a philosopher, to love you as a poet, and to esteem you as a friend."

But this romance was soon to be exchanged for reality; the elegancies of royal idleness were to be forgotten in the sound of cannon, and the fictions of a pampered fancy were to be thrown into the shade by the vicissitudes of one of the most sanguinary struggles that Europe had ever seen.

In 1740, Frederick had ascended the throne. He was at Potsdam, and confined to his chamber by illness, when the death of the Emperor Charles was announced to him. This event broke up the peace of Germany.

The Emperor, Charles VI., having no issue after a marriage of four years, established a new law of succession, known as the

Pragmatic Sanction. The heirship of Austria had hitherto been limited to males; but, by the new law, the undivided monarchy was to devolve first to his own daughters, or, if they should not be living at the time of his death, to the daughters of his elder brother Joseph, Electresses of Saxony and Bavaria, and so on, always to the nearest relatives.

The death of the Emperor obviously threatened to involve all Europe, and especially Germany, in convulsion; for the mere publication of the Pragmatic Sanction, in 1724, had produced counter declarations from no less than three princes of the empire, who regarded their rights as invaded. The Elector of Bavaria, who was married to a daughter of the Emperor Joseph I., founded a claim to the Austrian dominions on the will of Ferdinand I.; France was disposed to enter into an alliance with Prussia; Sweden and Russia would have been inevitably involved in the war. And it was of this complication of events that the young Prussian monarch took advantage to make an assault upon Austria. For one hundred years Prussia had complained of the loss of Silesia. Her successive kings had severally impeached its seizure by Austria, and the Great Elector had still earlier bequeathed the recovery of the province to the gallantry, or the good fortune, of his successors. Frederick, now at the head of a powerful army, with a full treasury, and seeing an approaching contest for the possession of Austria itself, regarded this as a favourable moment for the recovery of his ancestral territory.

Frederick, having now completed all his preparations, sent an

envoy to Vienna, to offer his alliance to Maria-Theresa, and his vote to her husband at the election of emperor, provided she would give up Silesia. But knowing the contempt with which the Austrian cabinet regarded the minor princes of Germany, and also knowing the advantage of promptitude, where the object is possession, he at once set his army in motion for the Silesian frontier. His proposal was, as he had foreseen, rejected; and on its rejection, without a moment's delay, he rushed over the frontier. He found, as he had expected, the Austrian government wholly unprepared. The whole disposable force of Austria, for the defence of Silesia, amounted to 3000 men. The invading army amounted to 28,000. Breslau the capital, Glogau the principal fortress, every town, speedily fell before him. In a note to his friend Jordan, who had attempted to dissuade him from the enterprise, he wrote, in a mixture of scoffing and exultation —

> "My gentle M. Jordan, my kind, my mild, my peace-loving M. Jordan, I acquaint your serenity that Silesia is as good as conquered. I prepare you for most important plans, and announce to you the greatest luck that the womb of fortune ever produced. For the present this must be enough for you. Be my Cicero in defending my enterprise; in its execution I will be your Cæsar."

We now advert to the distinguished public servant whose correspondence throws the principal light on this important period of our foreign policy – the British envoy to the court of Berlin.

Andrew Mitchell was born in Edinburgh in 1708, son of one of the ministers of St Giles's, king's chaplain for Scotland. His mother, Margaret Cunningham, was a descendant of Lord Glencairn. Mitchell adopted the law as his profession, was admitted to the Middle Temple, and was called to the English bar in 1738. Besides a knowledge of the Scotch law, he was a man of general and rather elegant acquirement, having left among his papers observations on the Ciceronian philosophy, on the chief European histories, on morals, models, statues, and classic objects in general. He was also a member of the Royal Society.

Mitchell was evidently either sustained by active interest, or an opinion of his talents; for on the appointment of the Marquis of Tweeddale to the secretaryship for Scotland, he fixed on Mitchell as his undersecretary. In 1747, he was elected member for the county of Aberdeen. In 1756, he was appointed as British representative at the court of Frederick II.

In the more decorous style of modern diplomacy, we can seldom find examples of the court-candour with which the royal personages of the last age spoke of each other. George II. called Frederick-William "my brother the corporal." Frederick-William called George II. "my brother the dancing-master." Of course those opinions made their way to the last ears which ought to have heard them, and they left stings. But the necessities of the time overcame the bitterness of the sarcasms. Some of the letters of the elder Horace Walpole, Sir Robert's brother, who had been ambassador at Paris and the Hague, then the chief

scenes of foreign diplomacy, probably expressed the chief feeling of English public men in his day, as they certainly were soon embodied in their policy. Of Frederick II. he says, —

> "I know the character of that prince. I know how little he is to be trusted, and I would not have trusted him without good security for the execution of his engagements… I need not tell you that the house of Brandenburg is a rising house. The economy of the late king, the spirit of discipline he introduced into his army, the ambition, talents, and active genius of the present monarch, must render that house a powerful friend or formidable enemy."

He gives an equally decisive opinion of the Austrian policy —

> "I apprehend that the principal object of the court of Vienna will be to distract, divide, and *devour* the Prussian dominions. Their pride, their vengeance, and, above all, their *bigotry* will naturally lead them to destroy a *Protestant* power that has dared to offend them."

At length it was ascertained that a private negotiation had been commenced between Austria and France, the result of which must expose the Electoral dominions to invasion by France. An alliance with Prussia was immediately concluded. The account subsequently given by Thiébault, in his *Memoirs of the Prussian Court*, gives a strong impression of Mitchell's manliness and intelligence: —

> "Sir Andrew Mitchell, Knight of the Order of the Garter, [a mistake for the Bath,] had been for several

years the English ambassador at Berlin, when I first arrived there. Some time, however, elapsed before I had the least acquaintance with him, not only because it was little to be expected that Englishmen should be desirous of the society of Frenchmen, but also because Sir Andrew Mitchell was of the number of those meritorious characters who stand in no need of perpetual society for existence, and have the philosophy to prefer being occasionally alone. When he first arrived in Berlin, he had caused the persons who necessarily invited him to their houses considerable perplexity; for he played at no game of cards, so that his hosts constantly said, – 'What shall we do with the Englishman, who never plays at cards?' In a few days, however, the contest was, who should withhold himself from the card-table, and have the advantage of conversing with a man in whom they had discovered every requisite to afford the highest pleasure in colloquial intercourse. In reality, his understanding was no less admirable than the virtues of his character. Of this I cannot give a more substantial proof, than by observing that he was united in the strictest bonds of friendship with the author of *L'Esprit des Loix*."

Some of the shrewd *bons-mots* of the diplomatic Scot are given by the Frenchman. On one occasion, when the English mail had three times been due, the king said to him at the levée – "Have you not the spleen, M. Mitchell, when the mail is thus delayed?" The reply was, – "No, Sire, not when it is delayed, but often enough when it duly arrives."

The English cabinet having promised to send a fleet to the

Baltic, to prevent the Russians from sending troops against the king, and the fleet not appearing, Frederick was chagrined; at length he ceased to invite the envoy to the royal table. One day some of the servants, meeting him, asked, – "Is it dinner-time, M. Mitchell?" The significant retort was, – "Gentlemen, no fleet, no dinner." This was told to Frederick, and the invitations were renewed.

The next *bon-mot* is happier still. After the taking of Port Mahon, and the retreat of the unfortunate Admiral Byng, the king, meeting the envoy, said, – "You have made a bad beginning, M. Mitchell; your trial of Admiral Byng is but a bad plaster for the disease; you have made an unlucky campaign." "Sire," observed Mitchell, "we hope, with God's assistance, to make a better one next year."

"With God's assistance, sir! I did not know that you had such an ally," said the king.

"We hope we have, Sire; and he is the *only one* of our allies that costs us nothing," was the pungent reply.

In the latter portion of the war against Napoleon, it was the custom to send British officers to attend the headquarters of the Allies, and diplomatists frequently moved along with the armies. But the instance of Mitchell's moving along with the Prussian monarch was, we believe, the first example of the kind. On this subject, we have a lively letter from the Earl of Holdernesse, then Secretary of State to the envoy: —

"Dear Sir, – I heartily wish you health and success in

the new trade you are going to undertake. However, do not grow too much a soldier, and set a bad precedent for the rest of your black brethren of the ink-bottle. Observation is our business, not fighting. Remember, if you do get a knock of the pate, *vous en emporterez la peine, et l'on dira – Que diable y avoit-il à faire*. Yet I would not advise you to follow the steps of the minister of Mayence at Dettingen, who, during the time of action, came up to Lord Granville's coach, crying out, '*Je proteste contre toute violence*.'

"I can find no trace in the office books of any particular allowance made to Foreign Ministers for such sort of expeditions; but I am persuaded I shall adjust it easily with the Duke of Newcastle. Once more, adieu. Our constant toast now here is, 'Success to the King of Prussia.' He grows vastly popular among us. For my part, I always add a gulp more to my old friend Mitchell."

A letter from the envoy, addressed to the King of Prussia, makes the formal request that he may be allowed to follow the headquarters – a permission which was immediately conceded by the king. The object of this request, (suggested by the English Ministry,) was twofold – to have an intelligent observer of the politics of Prussia on the spot; and to supply George II. with anecdotes of war, for which he conceived himself to have a peculiar talent; and on which subject the despatches of the envoy were always read by him with peculiar interest.

The envoy was not long without material. Before he left Berlin, he had the following despatch to write to the Earl of Holdernesse

—

> "My Lord, – This morning, about seven o'clock, Monsieur Oppen, an officer in the Guards, arrived here from the Prussian army. He had no letters, only a scrap of paper without date, which he was directed to deliver to the queen-mother, in which was written with a pencil, in the king's own hand, that his troops had beaten the Austrians, *platte couture*, that he reckoned his loss about two thousand, and that of the Austrians at four thousand men."

This was a hard-fought but indecisive action. The Austrians, under Marshal Browne, were the assailants; and the engagement continued from morning till past midday, when they retreated; but they numbered two-thirds more than the Prussians, their force being nearly seventy thousand to about forty thousand.

But a more important success immediately followed. The Saxon army, amounting to sixteen thousand, had been surrounded in their fortified camp at Pirna; the fortifications were so strong that the only hope of reducing them was by famine. To the universal astonishment, they suddenly quitted this impregnable position, and marched into a defile, where they could neither advance nor retreat. The king offered them conditions, which they accepted; and Mitchell, who had waited at Berlin only for the royal permission to join the army, arrived just in time to see the surrender; and what was more curious still, the quiet transfer of their allegiance to the Prussian service. He thus writes —

"October 21, 1756.

"On Sunday the 17th, the Saxon troops, preceded by their general officers, crossed the Elbe… Thence they marched into a plain in the neighbourhood, and, after passing between two battalions of Prussian Guards, they were received by the battalions of the Prince of Prussia's regiments, drawn up on the right and left. They were then formed into a hollow square, and had the articles of war read, and the military oath administered to them, in the presence of Prince Maurice of Anhalt-Dessau, or of Prince Ferdinand, the King of Prussia's brother. The soldiers were all armed; but the officers, almost to a man, refused to enter into the Prussian service.

"The whole Saxon army consisted of sixteen thousand, of which three thousand were horse and dragoons. The soldiers are extremely well-looking, mostly young men, and do not seem to have suffered for want of provisions during the blockade of five weeks. The cavalry have suffered more – many of their horses are ruined."

But we are not to suppose that this association with the mighty of the earth, and these exhibitions of capitulating armies were without their drawbacks. The Prussian king's politics were always subtle, the English cabinet was already tottering, and the campaign was already prolonged into winter. The envoy's correspondence at length sinks into complaint, and his description of his harassed life might make a man shrink from the honours of travelling diplomacy. He writes in November

from Seidlitz —

> "I am here in a very awkward situation – quite out of my element; and though I have great reason to be satisfied with the King of Prussia's manner of treating me, I wish I was at Berlin again, or rather in England, notwithstanding the absurd speeches that I should hear in parliament.
>
> "The Prussian camp is no place of pleasure. Neither convenience nor luxury dwell here. You are well provided with everything, *if* you bring it along with you. I find I must increase my equipage, or *starve*. *All my family are like spectres.* It is true I am fed at the king's table, because he desired me to leave my equipage at Dresden. The Duke of Newcastle has this *encouraging* paragraph in his letter: 'I will forward your demands for the expenses of your journey, whenever you send them over in a *proper manner* to my Lord Holdernesse.' I have spent a great deal of money, and have *hardly* the necessaries of life, and *none* of its comforts."

Correspondence of this intimate kind gives us a true view of that life which the world in general sees so gilded and glittering. It thus has a value superior to even its historical interest. It tells the humbler conditions of life to be content with their fate; and perhaps demonstrates that, like the traveller among mountains, the higher man goes, the more slippery is his path, and the more stormy his atmosphere. The Secretary of State thus writes: —

> *"November, 1766.*

"Mr Pitt [Chatham] has been laid up with a severe fit of the gout ever since his nomination to office, which has greatly retarded business. I think his opinions on foreign affairs, *now he is in place*, are exactly the same with mine, however different they were some time ago. *Tempora mutantur et nos, &c.*– I hope you will never find that maxim applicable to your old friend in Arlington Street. I knew long ago of some *private letters* written to you by the Duke of Newcastle. You were in the right not to discover a secret intrusted to you; but though – for reasons you know – I bore this from *him*, such matters must cease for the future with *others*. I therefore insist that I may know directly if any other person in the Administration offers to correspond with you. While I remain in business, I will do the duty of my office *myself*, and without submitting to those disagreeable interruptions I have met with from others; nor will I henceforward be led by persons of my own age, and less experience.

"In short, dear Mitchell, if I stay in, I must now have my share of the cake; and if you hear I continue, depend upon it I have succeeded in what I think just and reasonable pretensions. A volume would not explain to you the transactions of these last six weeks. We have five Administrations in one day, and none existing at night.

"The parliament will produce a motley scene next week; you are happy to be out of the scrape."

The next campaign was one of still greater political perplexity, and of still more desperate fighting. It was signalised by the then

unheard-of number of four pitched battles; but the French war has since accustomed history to more ruinous and more frequent conflicts. The first engagement was the battle of Prague, thus hastily sketched in a flying despatch to Lord Holdernesse: —

"May 6.

"I have the honour to acquaint your lordship that this day, a little before ten o'clock in the morning, a general engagement began between the Prussian and Austrian armies, which lasted till half an hour past two in the afternoon. The fire of the artillery and small arms was dreadful; but I can yet give no account of particulars on either side. All we know is, that the left of the Prussians, commanded by the king, attacked the right of the Austrians, and, after a very obstinate resistance, drove them from the field of battle. The Prussian hussars and cavalry are now in full pursuit of them, and the right wing of the Austrians are now retiring towards the Zasawa. The right of the Prussians attacked the left of the Austrians, have likewise defeated them, and drove them towards the Moldan. A great part of their infantry have thrown themselves into Prague.

"The place where this action happened is in the high grounds on the other side of Prague. The King of Prussia's army, after the junction with Marshal Schwerin, might be seventy or eighty thousand men; and that of the Austrians upwards of one hundred thousand – the deserters say one hundred and fifty thousand.

"I can say nothing of the loss on either side, which must be considerable. But the whole Prussian army are now in

tears for the loss of Marshal Schwerin, one of the greatest officers this, or perhaps any country, has produced, and one of the best of men. The King of Prussia is well, but greatly afflicted for the loss of Marshal Schwerin."

This victory cost a terrible sacrifice of human life. The victors had eighteen thousand men *hors-de-combat*; the vanquished had twenty-four thousand killed, wounded, and taken. The struggle was long doubtful. At one period of the day, the Prussian infantry, moving through a defile, recoiled from the showers of ball which swept the head of the defile; the Marshal rushed forward to the front, and, taking a standard from its bearer, led back the column, and charged the enemy. In this charge the gallant old man was struck by a ball, and fell. He was seventy-two.

This battle was useless, for all its fruits were lost immediately after; but in a military sense it was justifiable, for it was fought to prevent the junction of Marshal Daun with General Browne, whose army protected Prague. Its effects in England, however, were greatly to increase the popular feeling in favour of Frederick. A letter from Lord Holdernesse gives a strong picture of the public excitement: —

"May 20, 1757.

"Dear Mitchell, – A fishing-boat despatched by Colonel Yorke, (Sir Joseph,) brought us, last night, the news of the great and glorious victory obtained by the King of Prussia, near Prague, on the 6th inst., which fortunate event has

filled the Court and the whole nation with the highest joy, and raised the admiration we already had of his Prussian Majesty's heroism to the highest pitch. Women and children are singing his praises; the most frantic marks of joy appear in the public streets: he is, in short, become the idol of the people. It only remains that we make a proper use of those advantages, and neither suffer ourselves to be elated beyond bounds, or to lose precious moments."

But, from the beginning, the struggle was unequal between Austria and Prussia. Nothing but a miracle could make a country then but of five millions vanquish a country of thirty; and the prodigious rapidity with which the Austrian armies were recruited after the severest losses, made perpetual battles actually necessary to keep them at bay. The Prussians had blockaded Prague. An Austrian force of forty-two thousand, or upwards, was advancing to raise the blockade; and Frederick, with his usual promptitude, rushed to meet it on its march, with thirty-two thousand. The armies met at Kaurzim, (better known as Kolin.) The battle began at noon, and was carried into night. The Prussians attacked: the Austrian positions were too strong for even the impetuosity and the perseverance of their brave assailants. The Prussians, after driving them from two heights, were ascending the *third*, when, from some mistake, their flank was exposed. The Austrian cavalry, then the finest on the Continent, took instant advantage of the misfortune, charged, and threw the whole movement into confusion. The battle was lost; and though the king retained the honour of the day by resting

that night on the field, the result was unequivocal, in a retrograde march next day, and the raising of the blockade of Prague.

This battle diminished his army by thirteen thousand men! The king exposed himself with almost desperation. At last his staff remonstrated with him on his gallant obstinacy, and one of his officers even exclaimed, "Does your Majesty mean to storm those batteries alone?"

Frederick was now in the deepest distress. The Austrian hussars had advanced to the gates of Berlin, and even levied a contribution on the city. The scandalous convention by which the Hanoverian army laid down its arms, let loose its French assailants; and Prussia was about to be crushed by a weight of force then unexampled in European hostilities. On this occasion the envoy speaks in the spirit of a man who saw no hope for the king, but to save himself by a negotiation in which he must concede everything, or take his chance of an honourable death in the field. But he strikingly reminds the British Cabinet of the probable consequences of disaster to Prussia.

> "If the King of Prussia should be ruined, or obliged, from necessity, to throw himself into the arms of France, (which he has no inclination to do,) my duty obliges me to put your lordship in mind what the situation of England will be next year, without a single friend on the Continent to resist the whole undiverted power of France, instigated by the malice of the house of Austria, against which too early and too vigorous preparations cannot be made, and I most heartily wish they may be effectual.

> "I have but *one* imagination which comforts me, which arises from the *insatiable ambition* of the French. They have already ruined a great part of Germany and reduced the house of Brandenburg; they are at this moment masters of Germany, and have the Empress-Queen almost as much in their power as they have the King of Prussia. Now, it is not consistent with common sense to leave the house of Austria possessed of a greater degree of power than it ever had, and without a rival in the empire. I therefore flatter myself they will find some pretence to save the King of Prussia, which may embroil them with their new ally, and give a breathing-time to England."

The British envoy, sagacious as he certainly was, here adopted the common error of conceiving that the safety of England depended on her Continental allies. The cry has been repeated in every war in which England has been subsequently engaged; and the British diplomatist at foreign courts has habitually employed his ingenuity in the elaborate effort to warn us that the national existence depended at one time on the triumph of Prussia; at another, of Austria; or, at another, of Spain. All these are follies. The whole Continent, not merely alienated from us, but combined against us, was not able to shake the strength of England, during the last and bloodiest of all wars, urged by the last and bloodiest of all ambitions. In this foolish spirit, it has been echoed from one desponding party to another, that England was saved from ruin by the march from Moscow, then by the battle of Leipzig, then by the battle of Waterloo. England

would have survived, if Napoleon had grasped every province of Prussia, if Leipzig had been a field of German massacre, and if Waterloo had only exhibited the bravery without the fortune of the British army. This style of talking is trifling and pusillanimous – it exhibits an utter forgetfulness of history, and an utter ignorance of the actual capacities of the country. England, if true to herself, is unconquerable, and might look on Continental battles with no more personal consideration of the consequences than if they were battles in the clouds. Still, it will fully be admitted, that our Continental alliances ought to be scrupulously sustained; that, in the event of war with any of the Continental powers, it must be of importance to have as few enemies, and as many friends as we can; and that there can be no more short-sighted sense of the true interests of England than insult to foreign thrones, under the shallow pretext of forwarding the privileges of the people. Monarchs are the natural allies of a monarchy – rebels are the natural enemies of all government; and the attempt to create liberty on the Continent, by encouraging the absurdities of the rabble, is only to waste the noble influence of England in the most hopeless of all projects, and to degrade the national character by the abuse of the national principles.

The proverbial uncertainty of war was now about to be vividly illustrated by a new phase of Frederick's varied career. The French army, under the Prince Soubise, had poured into the centre of Germany in great force, and Marshal Keith, a gallant Scot, distinguished in the service of Prussia, was sent to check

their irruption. The result was one of the most extraordinary victories on record. Frederick had arrived at Rosbach with but eighteen thousand men; the French and Imperialists, amounting to sixty thousand, made sure of his capture. It was even said that the Prince de Soubise had already sent a courier to Paris announcing it, and the ruin of the whole army. The French officers, in the spirit of their nation, actually scoffed at the idea of war with so small a kingdom as Prussia. They said "it was doing Monsieur le Marquis de Brandenbourg too much honour to carry on a *sort* of war with him."

On the 6th of November, Soubise advanced; the King then formed his plan of attack. It was to fall on the enemy before they had time to form. The general of cavalry, Seydlitz, was to turn the enemy's horse, and fall on their infantry in the act of formation. The two armies moved parallel to each other, until Seydlitz had turned the enemy's right unseen. The Prussian infantry were in movement after him; but seeing, with the quick eye of a thorough soldier, a favourable moment, he galloped in front of his squadrons, threw up his meerschaum in the air, as the signal for attack, and plunged into the enemy's columns. Two Austrian cuirassier regiments and two French battalions fought stoutly, but they were overwhelmed. All thenceforth was confusion. Though the king's infantry had scarcely been engaged, the enemy's infantry had been driven together in a mass, and, on nightfall, had broken up. By six in the evening the victory was complete. Six thousand prisoners were taken, with five generals

and three hundred officers. The Allied army lost, on the whole, ten thousand men; the Prussians about four hundred in killed and wounded. They took seventy guns, fifteen standards, &c.

This victory spread universal exultation through Germany. It was scarcely to be called a German defeat, for the weight of the action fell on the French. It was regarded as a trial of strength between the German and the Frenchman. The victory made the king a National champion.

Many years after the battle, the inhabitants of the vicinity erected a pillar as its memorial. In the disastrous days of Prussia in our time, Napoleon, after surveying the scene of the battle, ordered the pillar to be conveyed to Paris. But, on the day before the first entrance of the Allies into Paris, in 1814, the veterans of the Invalides threw the pillar into the Seine, that it might not be restored to the Prussians. After the victory of Leipzig, however, an iron column was placed on the site of the old memorial.

The victory gave occasion to one of Frederick's *bons-mots*. The conversation at table turned on the comparative style of living among the German princes; the king pronounced that of the Prince Hildburg-Hausen to be the most magnificent, "for," said he, "he keeps thirty thousand *runners*." (The prince had commanded the German troops who were beaten along with Soubise.)

But all was vicissitude in this campaign. While the king was triumphing in one quarter, he was all but ruined in another. The Duke of Bevern, commanding in Silesia, was attacked by a force

so overpowering that the province was soon in the hands of the Austrians. Their purpose was now to fall upon the king, and extinguish him. Frederick, in this knowledge, made an appeal to the loyalty of his generals; and, declaring that he had no alternative but victory or death, offered to give his dismission to any officer who was unwilling to follow him farther. The whole levée burst into protestations of fidelity; and the king marched to fight the Austrians at Leuthen, under the command of Prince Charles of Lorraine, assisted by the most distinguished of their generals, Marshal Daun. But this was the battle of despair. In the king's last speech to his officers, he said – "Should I fall, and not be able to remunerate the services which you have rendered me, the country must do it. Now, go to the camp, and repeat to the regiments what I have said to you."

On the morning of the 5th, at daybreak, the Prussians moved. On their march they fell in with cavalry pushed forward under the well-known General Wostitz. The Austrians were instantly overwhelmed, and Wostitz, furious at his misfortune, rushing into the midst of the Prussian cavalry, received fourteen wounds, of which he died two days after.

Among the prisoners was a deserter, a Frenchman. The king questioned him, "Why did you leave me?" "The fact is," answered the deserter, "things were going on very badly with us." "Come, come," replied Frederick, probably amused by the fellow's nonchalance in a moment of such peril to himself, "let us fight another battle to-day. If I am beaten, we shall desert

together to-morrow." He then sent him back to join his old regiment.

The king's manœuvre, on his advance, was so dexterous that, even to the experienced eye of Daun, he appeared to be in retreat. "The Prussians are off," said he to Prince Charles; "let us not disturb them." The cautious marshal always practised the maxim of "a bridge of gold for a retreating enemy." But the hasty Prince resolved on a battle. He was speedily to feel the hazard of such an antagonist as Frederick. The manœuvre was intended to throw the whole force of the Prussians on the Austrian left wing. It succeeded perfectly. The wing was turned, and, after a brief resistance, was driven from the field. The village of Leuthen, the centre of their position, was then stormed; but the Austrian artillery was powerful, and every attack cost great slaughter. The battle was now for a while doubtful – but it was at last decided by a charge of cavalry. The Austrian general, Luchesi, had attempted to fall with his troopers on the Prussian flank; but, in the act, he was unexpectedly charged by the main body of the Prussian cavalry. Luchesi fell, his cavalry were broken, and the battle was at an end. The rest was the capture of the separate posts of the Austrians, and the pursuit of the right wing, which, though not engaged, had disbanded. This success was unexampled. The Prussians took twenty thousand prisoners, one hundred and sixteen guns, fifty-one pair of colours, and four thousand baggage waggons. The Austrians left seven thousand four hundred men on the field. The victors lost, in killed and

wounded, six thousand men. This victory produced a prodigious effect on the public opinion of Europe. To have won two pitched battles, with inferior numbers, and in the midst of political difficulties, with all his conquests torn from him, and his capital insulted and laid under contribution, appeared like the work of romance. The king was, from that moment, the first of European generals. He was the invincible Frederick the Great in German lips; the Protestant hero, by a still more honourable title, in England. Germany then first felt that she had poets, and a theme for poetry. Bards sprang up on every side, and the Prussian king's exploits were sung in palace, cottage, and bivouac. The war-songs of Glein exhibited the true fire of poetry, and form stirring and noble records of the time to this day.

Mitchell's correspondence, on this important occasion, was exulting. On the 9th December, he writes —

> "My Lord, – This moment a chasseur has arrived from Silesia, with the news of a complete victory obtained by his Prussian Majesty on the 5th, between Neumarkt and Lissa. The chasseur was present in, and despatched from the field of battle… In a letter from the king to his brother, Prince Henry, he says he had taken eight thousand prisoners, many standards, colours, and cannon that he had attacked with his right, *et qu'il avait refusé la gauche*, which had succeeded perfectly well, *parce qu'il avait tourné l'ennemi*."

The envoy, in his subsequent letters, collects intelligence from all quarters, and sends it in fragments.

"We have yet no *relation* of the *victory of victories*, but there are letters from the King of Prussia which say that he expected soon to be master of Breslau, and of the garrison and wounded in that town, amounting to ten thousand men. He computes the loss of the Austrians at thirty thousand… What I write is almost incredible; but two miracles, in the space of one month, two victories gained by the same handful of men – for the Prussian army, in the first action of the 5th of November, did not exceed eighteen thousand, and in the last might be from thirty to thirty-five thousand – have, I hope, restored affairs to a situation I never expected to see them in."

The merit of this diligence may be estimated from the difficulty of correspondence in those days of convulsion. In his first despatch on this subject, so important to the English cabinet, he says, —

"In case this letter should be stopped, I have prevailed with a Jew to write to his correspondent at the Hague a letter in *Hebrew*, which contains further particulars, &c., which he is directed forthwith to communicate to Colonel Yorke, (the British Resident with the States of Holland.)"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.