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Содержание

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MILL'S LOGIC. [1]

These are *not* degenerate days. We have still strong thinkers amongst us; men of untiring perseverance, who flinch before no difficulties, who never hide the knot which their readers are only too willing that they should let alone; men who dare write what the ninety-nine out of every hundred will pronounce a *dry* book; who pledge themselves, not to the public, but to their subject, and will not desert it till their task is completed. One of this order is Mr John Stuart Mill. The work he has now presented to the public, we deem to be, after its kind, of the very highest character, every where displaying powers of clear, patient, indefatigable thinking. Abstract enough it must be allowed to be, calling for an unremitted attention, and yielding

[1] A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive; being a connected view of the Principles of Evidence, and the Methods of Scientific Investigation. By John Stuart Mill. In two volumes. London: Parker.

but little, even in the shape of illustration, of lighter and more amusing matter; he has taken no pains to bestow upon it any other interest than what searching thought and lucid views, aptly expressed, ought of themselves to create. His subject, indeed —the laws by which human belief and the inquisition of truth are to be governed and directed—is both of that extensive and fundamental character, that it would be treated with success only by one who knew how to resist the temptations to digress, as well as how to apply himself with vigour to the solution of the various questions that must rise before him.

> "This book," the author says in his preface, "makes no pretence of giving to the world a new theory of our intellectual operations. Its claim to attention, if it possess any, is grounded on the fact, that it is an attempt not to supersede, but to embody and systematize, the best ideas which have been either promulgated on its subject by speculative writers, or conformed to by accurate thinkers in their scientific enquiries.
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> "To cement together the detached fragments of a subject, never yet treated as a whole; to harmonize the true portions of discordant theories, by supplying the links of thought necessary to connect them, and by disentangling them from the errors with which they are always more or less interwoven—must necessarily require a considerable amount of original speculation. To other originality than this, the present work lays no claim. In the existing state of the cultivation of the sciences, there would be a very strong presumption against any one who should imagine

> that he had effected a revolution in the theory of the investigation of truth, or added any fundamentally new process to the practice of it. The improvement which remains to be effected in the methods of philosophizing, [and the author believes that they have much need of improvement,] can only consist in performing, more systematically and accurately, operations with which, at least in their elementary form, the human intellect, in some one or other of its employments, is already familiar."

Such is the manly and modest estimate which the author makes of his own labours, and the work fully bears out the character here given of it. No one capable of receiving pleasure from the disentanglement of intricacies, or the clear exposition of an abstruse subject; no one seeking assistance in the acquisition of distinct and accurate views on the various and difficult topics which these volumes embrace—can fail to read them with satisfaction and with benefit.

To give a full account—to give any account—of a work which traverses so wide a field of subject, would be here a futile attempt; we should, after all our efforts, merely produce a laboured and imperfect synopsis, which would in vain solicit the perusal of our readers. What we purpose doing, is to take up, in the order in which they occur, some of the topics on which Mr Mill has thrown a new light, or which he has at least invested with a novel interest by the view he has given of them. And as, in this selection of topics, we are not bound to choose those which are most austere and repulsive, we hope that such of our readers as

are not deterred by the very name of logic, will follow us with some interest through the several points of view, and the various extracts we shall present to them.

The Syllogism.—The logic of *Induction*, as that to which attention has been least devoted, which has been least reduced to systematic form, and which lies at the basis of all other modes of reasoning, constitutes the prominent subject of these volumes. Nevertheless, the old topic of logic proper, or deductive reasoning, is not omitted, and the first passage to which we feel bound, on many accounts, to give our attention, is the disquisition on the syllogism.

Fortunately for us it is not necessary, in order to convey the point of our author's observations upon this head, to afflict our readers with any dissertation upon *mode* or *figure*, or other logical technicalities. The first form or *figure* of the syllogism (to which those who have not utterly forgotten their scholastic discipline will remember that all others may be reduced) is familiar to every one, and to this alone we shall have occasion to refer.

> "All men are mortal.
> A king is a man;
> Therefore a king is mortal."

Who has not met—what young lady even, though but in her teens, has not encountered some such charming triplet as this, which looks so like verse at a distance, but, like some other

compositions, approximates nothing the more on this account to poetry? Who has not learnt from such examples what is a *major*, what a *middle term*, and what the *minor* or conclusion?

As no one, in the present day, advises the adoption, in our controversies, of the syllogistic forms of reasoning, it is evident that the value of the syllogism must consist, not in its practical use, but in the accurate type which it affords of the process of reasoning, and in the analysis of that process which a full understanding of it renders necessary. Such an analysis supplies, it is said, an excellent discipline to the mind, whilst an occasional reference to the form of the syllogism, as a type or model of reasoning, insures a steadiness and pertinency of argument. But is the syllogism, it has been asked, this veritable type of our reasoning? Has the analysis which would explain it to be such, been accurately conducted?

Several of our northern metaphysicians, it is well known—as, for example, Dr Campbell and Dugald Stewart—have laid rude hands upon the syllogism. They have pronounced it to be a vain invention. They have argued that no addition of knowledge, no advancement in the acquisition of truth, no new conviction, can possibly be obtained through its means, inasmuch as no syllogism can contain any thing in the conclusion which was not admitted, at the outset, in the first or major proposition. The syllogism always, say they, involves a *petitio principii*. Admit the major, and the business is palpably at an end; the rest is a mere circle, in which one cannot advance, but may get giddy by the revolution.

According to the exposition of logicians themselves, we simply obtain by our syllogism, the privilege of saying that, in the *minor*, of some individual of a class, which we had said, in the *major*, already of the whole class.

Archbishop Whately, our most distinguished expositor and defender of the Aristotelian logic, meets these antagonists with the resolute assertion, that their objection to the syllogism is equally valid against *all reasoning whatever*. He does not deny, but, on the contrary, in common with every logician, distinctly states, that whatever is concluded in the minor, must have been previously admitted in the major, for in this lies the very force and compulsion of the argument; but he maintains that the syllogism is the true type of all our reasoning, and that therefore to all our reasoning, the very same vice, the very same *petitio principii*, may be imputed. The syllogism, he contends, (and apparently with complete success,) is but a statement in full of what takes place mentally even in the most rapid acts of reasoning. We often suppress the major for the sake of brevity, but it is understood though not expressed; just as in the same manner as we sometimes content ourselves with merely implying the conclusion itself, because it is sufficiently evident without further words. If any one should so far depart from common sense as to question the mortality of some great king, we should think it sufficient to say for all argument—the king is a man!—virtually implying the whole triplet above mentioned:—

"All men are mortal.
The king is a man;
Therefore the king is mortal."

"In pursuing the supposed investigation, (into the operation of reasoning,)" says Archbishop Whately, "it will be found that every conclusion is deduced, in reality, from two other propositions, (thence called *Premisses*;) for though one of these may be and commonly is suppressed, it must nevertheless be understood as admitted, as may easily be made evident by supposing the *denial* of the suppressed premiss, which will at once invalidate the argument; *e.g.* if any one, from perceiving that 'the world exhibits marks of design,' infers that 'it must have had an intelligent author,' though he may not be aware in his own mind of the existence of any other premiss, he will readily understand, if it be *denied* that 'whatever exhibits marks of design must have had an intelligent author,' that the affirmative of that proposition is necessary to the solidity of the argument. An argument thus stated regularly and at full length, is called a syllogism; which, therefore, is evidently not a peculiar *kind of argument*, but only a peculiar *form* of expression, in which every argument may be stated."—*Whately's Logic*, p. 27.

"It will be found," he continues, "that all valid arguments whatever may be easily reduced to such a form as that of the foregoing syllogisms; and that consequently the principle on which they are constructed is the Universal Principle

of reasoning. So elliptical, indeed, is the ordinary mode of expression, even of those who are considered as prolix writers, —*i.e.* so much is implied and left to be understood in the course of argument, in comparison of what is actually stated, (most men being impatient, even to excess, of any appearance of unnecessary and tedious formality of statement,) that a single sentence will often be found, though perhaps considered as a single argument, to contain, compressed into a short compass, a chain of several distinct arguments. But if each of these be fully developed, and the whole of what the author intended to imply be stated expressly, it will be found that all the steps, even of the longest and most complex train of reasoning, may be reduced into the above form."—P. 32.

That it is not the office of the syllogism to discover *new* truths, our logician fully admits, and takes some pains to establish. This is the office of "other operations of mind," not unaccompanied, however, with acts of reasoning. Reasoning, argument, inference, (words which he uses as synonymous,) have not for their object our advancement in knowledge, or the acquisition of new truths.

"Much has been said," says Archbishop Whately, in another portion of his work, "by some writers, of the superiority of the inductive to the syllogistic methods of seeking truth, as if the two stood opposed to each other; and of the advantage of substituting the *Organon* of Bacon for that of Aristotle, &c. &c., which indicates a total misconception of the nature of both. There is,

however, the more excuse for the confusion of thought which prevails on this subject, because eminent logical writers have treated, or at least have appeared to treat, of induction as a kind of argument distinct from the syllogism; which, if it were, it certainly might be contrasted with the syllogism: or rather the whole syllogistic theory would fall to the ground, since one of the very first principles it establishes, is that *all* reasoning, on whatever subject, is one and the same process, which may be clearly exhibited in the form of syllogisms.

"This inaccuracy seems chiefly to have arisen from a vagueness in the use of the word induction; which is sometimes employed to designate the process of *investigation* and of collecting facts, sometimes the deducing an inference *from* those facts. The former of these processes (*viz.* that of observation and experiment) is undoubtedly *distinct* from that which takes place in the syllogism; but then it is not a process of *argumentation*: the latter again *is* an argumentative process; but then it is, like all other arguments, capable of being syllogistically expressed."—P. 263.

"To prove, then, this point demonstratively, (namely, that it is not by a process of reasoning that new truths are brought to light,) becomes on these data perfectly easy; for since all reasoning (in the sense above defined) may be resolved into syllogisms; and since even the objectors to logic make it a subject of complaint, that in a syllogism the premises do virtually assert the conclusion, it follows at once that no new truth (as above defined) can be

elicited by any process of reasoning.

"It is on this ground, indeed, that the justly celebrated author of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* objects to the syllogism altogether, as necessarily involving a *petitio principii*; an objection which, of course, he would not have been disposed to bring forward, had he perceived that, whether well or ill founded, *it lies against all arguments whatever*. Had he been aware that the syllogism is no distinct kind of argument otherwise than in form, but is, in fact, *any* argument whatever stated regularly and at full length, he would have obtained a more correct view of the object of all reasoning; *which is merely to expand and unfold the assertions wrapt up, as it were, and implied in those with which we set out*, and to bring a person to perceive and acknowledge the full force of that which he has admitted; to contemplate it in various points of view; *to admit in one shape what he has already admitted in another*, and to give up and disallow whatever is inconsistent with it."—P. 273.

Now, what the Archbishop here advances appears convincing; his position looks impregnable. The syllogism is not a peculiar mode of reasoning, (how could it be?)—if any thing at all, it must be a general formula for expressing the ordinary act of reasoning—and he shows that the objections made by those who would impugn it, may be levelled with equal justice against all ratiocination whatever. But then this method of defending the syllogism, (to those of us who have stood beside, in the character of modest enquirers, watching the encounter of keen wits,) does

but aggravate the difficulty. Is it true, then, that in every act of reasoning, we do but conclude in one form, what, the moment before, we had stated in another? Are we to understand that such is the final result of the debate? If so, this act of reasoning appears very little deserving of that estimation in which it has been generally held. The great prerogative of intelligent beings (as it has been deemed,) grants them this only—to "admit in one shape what they had already admitted in another."

From the dilemma in which we are here placed, the Archbishop by no means releases, or attempts to release us: he seems (something too much after the manner and disposition generally attributed to masters in logic-fence,) to have rested satisfied with foiling his opponents in their attack upon the exact position he had bound himself to defend. He saves the syllogism; what becomes, in the controversy, of poor human reason itself, is not his especial concern—it is as much their business as his. You do not, more than I, he virtually says to his opponents, intend to resign all reasoning whatever as a mere inanity; I prove, for my part, that all reasoning is capable of being put into a syllogistic form, and that your objection, if valid against the syllogism, is equally valid against all ratiocination. You must therefore either withdraw your objection altogether, or advance it at your peril; the difficulty is of your making, you must solve it as you can. Gentlemen, you must muzzle your own dog.

In this posture of affairs the author of the present work comes to the rescue. He shall speak in his own words. But we must

premise, that although we do not intend to stint him in our quotation—though we wish to give him all the sea-room possible; yet, for a *full* development of his views, we must refer the reader to his volumes themselves. There are some disquisitions which precede the part we are about to quote from, which, in order to do complete justice to the subject, ought to find a place here, as well as in the author's work—but it is impossible.

> "It is universally allowed, that a syllogism is vicious, if there be any thing more in the conclusion than was assumed in the premisses. But this is, in fact, to say, that nothing ever was, or can be, proved by syllogism, which was not known, or assumed to be known, before. Is ratiocination, then, not a process of inference? And is the syllogism, to which the word reasoning has so often been represented to be exclusively appropriate, not really entitled to be called reasoning at all? This seems an inevitable consequence of the doctrine, admitted by all writers on the subject, that a syllogism can prove no more than is involved in the premisses. Yet the acknowledgment so explicitly made, has not prevented one set of writers from continuing to represent the syllogism as the correct analysis of what the mind actually performs in discovering and proving the larger half of the truths, whether of science or of daily life, which we believe; while those who have avoided this inconsistency, and followed out the general theorem respecting the logical value of the syllogism to its legitimate corollary, have been led to impute uselessness and frivolity to the syllogistic theory itself, on the ground

of the *petitio principii* which they allege to be inherent in every syllogism. As I believe both these opinions to be fundamentally erroneous, I must request the attention of the reader to certain considerations, without which any just appreciation of the true character of the syllogism, and the functions it performs in philosophy, appears to me impossible; but which seem to me to have been overlooked or insufficiently adverted to, both by the defenders of the syllogistic theory, and by its assailants.

"It must be granted, that in every syllogism, considered as an argument to prove the conclusion, there is a *petitio principii*. When we say—

'All men are mortal.
Socrates is a man;
THEREFORE
Socrates is mortal'—

it is unanswerably urged by the adversaries of the syllogistic theory, that the proposition, Socrates is mortal, is presupposed in the more general assumption, All men are mortal; that we cannot be assured of the mortality of all men, unless we were previously certain of the mortality of every individual man; that if it be still doubtful whether Socrates, or any other individual you choose to name, be mortal or not, the same degree of uncertainty must hang over the assertion, All men are mortal; that the general principle, instead of being given as evidence of

the particular case, cannot itself be taken for true without exception, until every shadow of doubt which could affect any case comprised with it, is dispelled by evidence *aliundè*, and then what remains for the syllogism to prove? that, in short, no reasoning from generals to particulars can, as such, prove any thing; since from a general principle you cannot infer any particulars, but those which the principle itself assumes as foreknown.

"This doctrine is irrefragable; and if logicians, though unable to dispute it, have usually exhibited a strong disposition to explain it away, this was not because they could discover any flaw in the argument itself, but because the contrary opinion seemed to rest upon arguments equally indisputable. In the syllogism last referred to, for example, or in any of those which we previously constructed, is it not evident that the conclusion may, to the person to whom the syllogism is presented, be actually and *bona fide* a new truth? Is it not matter of daily experience that truth previously undreamt of, facts which have not been, and cannot be, directly observed, are arrived at by way of general reasoning? We believe that the Duke of Wellington is mortal. We do not know this by direct observation, since he is not yet dead. If we were asked how, this being the case, we know the Duke to be mortal, we should probably answer, because all men are so. Here, therefore, we arrive at the knowledge of a truth not (as yet) susceptible of observation, by a reasoning which admits of being exhibited in the following syllogism—

'All men are mortal.
The Duke of Wellington is a man;
THEREFORE
The Duke of Wellington is mortal.'

"And since a large portion of our knowledge is thus acquired, logicians have persisted in representing the syllogism as a process of inference or proof; although none of them has cleared up the difficulty which arises from the inconsistency between that assertion and the principle, that if there be any thing in the conclusion which was not already asserted in the premisses, the argument is vicious. For it is impossible to attach any serious scientific value to such a mere salvo, as the distinction drawn between being involved *by implication* in the premisses, and being directly asserted in them. When Archbishop Whately, for example, says that the object of reasoning is 'merely to expand and unfold the assertions wrapt up, as it were, and implied in those with which we set out, and to bring a person to perceive and acknowledge the full force of that which he has admitted,' he does not, I think, meet the real difficulty requiring to be explained; namely, how it happens that a science like geometry *can* be all 'wrapt up' in a few definitions and axioms. Nor does this defence of the syllogism differ much from what its assailants urge against it as an accusation, when they charge it with being of no use except to those who seek to press the consequence of an admission into which a man has been entrapped, without having considered and understood its full force.

When you admitted the major premiss, you asserted the conclusion, 'but,' says Archbishop Whately, 'you asserted it by implication merely; this, however, can here only mean that you asserted it unconsciously—that you did not know you were asserting it; but if so, the difficulty revives in this shape. Ought you not to have known? Were you warranted in asserting the general proposition without having satisfied yourself of the truth of every thing which it fairly includes? And if not, what, then, is the syllogistic art but a contrivance for catching you in a trap, and holding you fast in it?'

"From this difficulty there appears to be but one issue. The proposition, that the Duke of Wellington is mortal, is evidently an inference, it is got at as a conclusion from something else; but do we, in reality, conclude it from the proposition—All men are mortal? I answer, No.

"The error committed is, I conceive, that of overlooking the distinction between the two parts of the process of philosophizing—the inferring part and the registering part; and ascribing to the latter the functions of the former. The mistake is that of referring a man to his own notes for the *origin* of his knowledge. If a man is asked a question, and is at the moment unable to answer it, he may refresh his memory by turning to a memorandum which he carries about with him. But if he were asked how the fact came to his knowledge, he would scarcely answer, because it was set down in his note-book.

"Assuming that the proposition, The Duke of Wellington is mortal, is immediately an inference from the proposition, All men are mortal, whence do we derive our knowledge

of that general truth? No supernatural aid being supposed, the answer must be, from observation. Now, all which men can observe are individual cases. From these all general truths must be drawn, and into these they may be again resolved; for a general truth is but an aggregate of particular truths—a comprehensive expression, by which an indefinite number of individual facts are affirmed or denied at once. But a general proposition is not merely a compendious form for recording and preserving in the memory a number of particular facts, all of which have been observed. Generalization is not a process of mere naming, it is also a process of inference. From instances which we have observed, we feel warranted in concluding, that what we found true in those instances holds in all similar ones —past, present, and future, however numerous they may be. We, then, by that valuable contrivance of language, which enables us to speak of many as if they were one, record all that we have observed, together with all that we infer from our observations, in one concise expression; and have thus only one proposition, instead of an endless number, to remember or to communicate. The results of many observations and inferences, and instructions for making innumerable inferences in unforeseen cases, are compressed into one short sentence.

"When, therefore, we conclude, from the death of John and Thomas, and every other person we ever heard of in whose case the experiment had been fairly tried, that the Duke of Wellington is mortal like the rest, we may, indeed, pass through the generalization, All men

are mortal, as an intermediate stage; but it is not in the latter half of the process—the descent from all men to the Duke of Wellington—that the *inference* resides. The inference is finished when we have asserted that all men are mortal. What remains to be performed afterwards is merely deciphering our own notes.

"Archbishop Whately has contended, that syllogizing, or reasoning from generals to particulars, is not, agreeably to the vulgar idea, a peculiar mode of reasoning, but the philosophical analysis of the mode in which all men reason, and must do so if they reason at all. With the deference due to so high an authority, I cannot help thinking that the vulgar notion is, in this case, the more correct. If, from our experience of John, Thomas, &c. who once were living, but are now dead, we are entitled to conclude that all human beings are mortal, we might surely, without any logical inconsequence, have concluded at once, from those instances, that the Duke Wellington is mortal. The mortality of John, Thomas, and Company, is, after all, the whole evidence we have for the mortality of the Duke of Wellington. Not one iota is added to the proof by interpolating a general proposition. Since the individual cases are all the evidence we can possess; evidence which no logical form into which we choose to throw it can make greater than it is; and since that evidence is either sufficient in itself, or, if insufficient for one purpose, cannot be sufficient for the other; I am unable to see why we should be forbidden to take the shortest cut from these sufficient premisses to the conclusion, and constrained to travel the

'high *priori* road' by the arbitrary fiat of logicians. I cannot perceive why it should be impossible to journey from one place to another, unless 'we march up a hill and then march down again.' It may be the safest road, and there may be a resting-place at the top of the hill, affording a commanding view of the surrounding country; but for the mere purpose of arriving at our journey's end, our taking that road is perfectly optional: it is a question of time, trouble, and danger.

"Not only *may* we reason from particulars to particulars, without passing through generals, but we perpetually do so reason. All our earliest inferences are of this nature. From the first dawn of intelligence we draw inferences; but years elapse before we learn the use of general language. The child who, having burnt his fingers, avoids to thrust them again into the fire, has reasoned or inferred, though he has never thought of the general maxim—fire burns. He knows from memory that he has been burnt, and on this evidence believes, when he sees a candle, that if he puts his finger into the flame of it, he will be burnt again. He believes this in every case which happens to arise; but without looking, in each instance, beyond the present case. He is not generalizing; he is inferring a particular from particulars.—Vol. I. p. 244.

"From the considerations now adduced, the following conclusions seem to be established:—All inference is from particulars to particulars: General propositions are merely registers of such inferences already made, and short formulæ for making more: The major premiss of a

> syllogism, consequently, is a formula of this description; and the conclusion is not an inference drawn *from* the formula, but an inference drawn *according to* the formula: the real logical antecedent, or premisses being *the particular facts from which the general proposition was collected by induction*. * * *
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> "In the above observations, it has, I think, been clearly shown, that although there is always a process of reasoning or inference where a syllogism is used, the syllogism is not a correct analysis of that process of reasoning or inference; which is, on the contrary, (when not a mere inference from testimony,) an inference from particulars to particulars; authorized by a previous inference from particulars to generals, and substantially the same with it: of the nature, therefore, of Induction. But while these conclusions appear to me undeniable, I must yet enter a protest, as strong as that of Archbishop Whately himself, against the doctrine that the syllogistic art is useless for the purposes of reasoning. The reasoning lies in the act of generalisation, not in interpreting the record of that act; but the syllogistic form is all indispensable collateral security for the correctness of the generalisation itself."—P. 259.

By this explanation we are released from the dilemma into which the syllogistic and non-syllogistic party had together thrown us. We can acknowledge that the process of reason can be always exhibited in the form of a syllogism, and yet not be driven to the strange and perplexing conclusion that our reasoning can never conduct us to a new truth, never lead us further than to

admit in one shape what we had already admitted in another. We have, or may have, it is true, a *major* in all our ratiocination, implied, if not expressed, and are so far syllogistic; but then the real premiss from which we reason is the amount of experience on which that major was founded, to which amount of experience we, in fact, made an addition in our *minor*, or conclusion.

But while we accept this explanation, and are grateful for the deliverance it works for us, we must also admit, (and we are not aware that Mr Mill would controvert this admission,) that there is a large class of cases in which our reasoning betrays no reference to this anterior experience, and where the usual explanation given by teachers of logic is perfectly applicable; cases where our object is, not the discovery of truth for ourselves, but to convince another of his error, by showing him that the proposition, which in his blindness or prejudice he has chosen to contradict, is part and parcel of some other proposition to which he has given, and is at all times ready to give, his acquiescence. In such cases, we frequently content ourselves with throwing before him this alternative—refuse your *major*, to which you have again and again assented, or accept, as involved in it, our *minor* proposition, which you have persisted in controverting.

It will have been gathered from the foregoing train of observation, that, in direct contradistinction to Archbishop Whately, who had represented induction (so far as it consisted of an act of ratiocination) as resolvable into deductive and syllogistic reasoning, our author has resolved the syllogism,

and indeed all deductive reasoning whatever, ultimately into examples of induction. In doing this, he is encountered by a metaphysical notion very prevalent in the present day, which lies across his path, and which he has to remove. We allude to the distinction between contingent and necessary truths; it being held by many philosophical writers that all necessary and universal truths owe their origin, not to experience (except as *occasion* of their development,) and not, consequently, to the ordinary process of induction, but flow from higher sources —flow immediately from some supreme faculty to which the name of reason has by some been exclusively appropriated, in order to distinguish it from the understanding, the faculty judging according to sense. We will pause a while upon this topic.

Contingent and Necessary Truths.—Those who have read Mr Whewell's treatise on the *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences*, will remember that there is no topic which that author labours more sedulously to inculcate than this same distinction between contingent and necessary truths; and it is against his statement of the doctrine in question, that Mr Mill directs his observations. Perhaps the controverted tenets would have sustained a more equal combat under the auspices of a more practised and more complete metaphysician than Mr Whewell; but a difficulty was probably experienced in finding a statement in any other well-known English author full and explicit. Referring ourselves to Mr Whewell's volumes for an extract, in order to give the distinction here contended against the advantage of an exposition in the

words of one who upholds it, we are embarrassed by the number which offer themselves. From many we select the following statement:—

"Experience," says Mr Whewell, "must always consist of a limited number of observations. And, however numerous these may be, they can show nothing with regard to the infinite number of cases in which the experiment has not been made. Experience, being thus unable to prove a fact to be universal, is, as will readily be seen, still more incapable of proving a fact to be necessary. Experience cannot, indeed, offer the smallest ground for the necessity of a proposition. She can observe and record what has happened; but she cannot find, in any case, or in any accumulation of cases, any reason for what *must* happen. She may see objects side by side, but she cannot see a reason why they must be ever side by side. She finds certain events to occur in succession; but the succession supplies, in its occurrence, no reason for its recurrence. She contemplates external objects; but she cannot detect any internal bond which indissolubly connects the future with the past, the possible with the real. To learn a proposition by experience, and to see it to be necessarily true, are two altogether different processes of thought.

"But it may be said, that we do learn, by means of observation and experience, many universal truths; indeed, all the general truths of which science consists. Is not the doctrine of universal gravitation learned by experience? Are not the laws of motion, the properties of light, the general properties of chemistry, so

learned? How, with these examples before us, can we say that experience teaches no universal truths?

"To this we reply, that these truths can only be known to be *general*, not universal, if they depend upon experience alone. Experience cannot bestow that universality which she herself cannot have, and that necessity of which she has no comprehension. If these doctrines are universally true, this universality flows from the *ideas* which we apply to our experience, and which are, as we have seen, the real sources of necessary truth. How far these ideas can communicate their universality and necessity to the results of experience, it will hereafter be our business to consider. It will then appear, that when the mind collects from observation truths of a wide and comprehensive kind, which approach to the simplicity and universality of the truths of pure science; she gives them this character by throwing upon them the light of her own fundamental ideas."—*Whewell*, Vol. I. p. 60.

Accordingly, Mr Whewell no sooner arrives at any truth which admits of an unconditional positive statement—a statement defying all rational contradiction—than he abstracts it from amongst the acquisitions of experience, and throwing over it, we suppose, the light of these fundamental ideas, pronounces it enrolled in the higher class of universal and necessary truths. The first laws of motion, though established through great difficulties against the most obstinate preconceptions, and by the aid of repeated experiments, are, when surveyed in their present perfect

form, proclaimed to be, not acquisitions of experience, but truths emanating from a higher and more mysterious origin.[2]

This distinction, which assigns a different mental origin to truths, simply because (from the nature of the subject-matter, as it seems to us) there is a difference with regard to the sort of certainty we feel of them, has always appeared to us most unphilosophical. It is admitted that we arrive at a general proposition through experience; there is no room, therefore, for quibbling as to the meaning of the term experience—it is understood that when we speak of a truth being derived from experience, we imply the usual exercise of our mental faculties; it is the step from a general to a universal proposition which alone occasions this perplexing distinction. The dogma is this—that experience can only teach us by a limited number of examples,

[2] Necessary truths multiply on us very fast. "We maintain," says Mr Whewell, "that this equality of *mechanical action and reaction* is one of the principles which do not flow from, but regulate, our experience. A mechanical pressure, not accompanied by an equal and opposite pressure, can no more be given by experience than two unequal right angles. With the supposition of such inequalities, space ceases to be space, form ceases to be form, matter ceases to be matter." And again he says, "*That the parallelogram of forces is a necessary truth*;" a law of motion of which we surely can *conceive* its opposite to be true. In some of these instances Mr Whewell appears, by a confusion of thought, to have given to the *physical fact* the character of necessity which resides in the mathematical formula employed for its expression. Whether a moving body would communicate motion to another body—whether it would lose its own motion by so doing—or what would be the result if a body were struck by two other bodies moving in different directions—are questions which, if they could be asked us prior to experience, we could give no answer whatever to—which we can easily conceive to admit of a quite different answer to that which experience has taught us to give.

and therefore can never establish a universal proposition. But if *all* experience is in favour of a proposition—if no experience has occurred even to enable the imagination to conceive its opposite, what more can be required to convert the general into a universal proposition?

Strange to say, the attribution of these characteristics of universality and necessity, becomes, amongst those who loudly insist upon the palpable nature of the distinction we are now examining, a matter of controversy; and there are a class of scientific truths, of which it is debated whether they are contingent or necessary. The only test that they belong to the latter order is, the impossibility of conceiving their opposites to be the truth; and it seems that men find a great difference in their powers of conception, and that what is impossible with one is possible with another. But (wisely, too) passing this over, and admitting that there is a distinction (though a very ill-defined one) between the several truths we entertain of this nature; namely, that some we find it impossible, even in imagination, to contradict, whilst of others we can suppose it possible that they should cease to be truths—does it follow that different faculties of the mind are engaged in the acquisition of them? Does nothing depend on the nature of the subject itself? "That two sides of a triangle," says Mr Whewell, "are greater than the third, is a universal and necessary geometrical truth; it is true of all triangles; it is true in such a way that the contrary cannot be conceived. *Experience could not prove such a proposition.*"

Experience is allowed to prove it of this or that triangle, but not as an inseparable property of a triangle. We are at a loss to perceive why the same faculties of the mind that can judge, say of the properties of animal life, of organized beings, cannot judge of the properties of a figure—properties which must immediately be conceived to exist the moment the figure is presented to the imagination. We say, for instance, of any animal, not because it is this or that animal, a sheep or an ox, but simply *as* animal, that it must sustain itself by food, by the process of assimilation. This, however, is merely a contingent truth, because it is in our power to conceive of organized beings whose substance shall not wear away, and consequently shall not need perpetual restoration. But what faculty of the mind is unemployed here that is engaged in perceiving the property of a triangle, that *as* triangle, it must have two sides greater than the third? The truths elicited in the two cases have a difference, inasmuch as a triangle differs from an animal in this, that it is impossible to conceive other triangles than those to which your truth is applicable, and therefore the proposition relating to the triangle is called a necessary truth. But surely this difference lies in the subject-matter, not in the nature of our mental faculties.

But we had not intended to interpose our own lucubrations in the place of those of Mr Mill.

> "Although Mr Whewell," says our author, "has naturally and properly employed a variety of phrases to bring his meaning more forcibly home, he will, I presume, allow

that they are all equivalent; and that what he means by a necessary truth, would be sufficiently defined, a proposition the negation of which is not only false, but inconceivable. I am unable to find in any of Mr Whewell's expressions, turn them what way you will, a meaning beyond this, and I do not believe he would contend that they mean any thing more.

"This, therefore, is the principle asserted: that propositions, the negation of which is inconceivable, or in other words, which we cannot figure to ourselves as being false, must rest upon evidence of higher and more cogent description than any which experience can afford. And we have next to consider whether there is any ground for this assertion.

"Now, I cannot but wonder that so much stress should be laid upon the circumstance of inconceivableness, when there is such ample experience to show that our capacity or incapacity for conceiving a thing has very little to do with the possibility of the thing in itself; but is in truth very much an affair of accident, and depends upon the past habits and history of our own minds. There is no more generally acknowledged fact in human nature, than the extreme difficulty at first felt in conceiving any thing as possible, which is in contradiction to long-established and familiar experience, or even to old and familiar habits of thought. And this difficulty is a necessary result of the fundamental laws of the human mind. When we have often seen and thought of two things together, and have never, in any one instance, either seen or thought of them separately, there is by the primary law of association an

increasing difficulty, which in the end becomes insuperable, of conceiving the two things apart. This is most of all conspicuous in uneducated persons, who are, in general, utterly unable to separate any two ideas which have once become firmly associated in their minds, and, if persons of cultivated intellect have any advantage on the point, it is only because, having seen and heard and read more, and being more accustomed to exercise their imagination, they have experienced their sensations and thoughts in more varied combinations, and have been prevented from forming many of these inseparable associations. But this advantage has necessarily its limits. The man of the most practised intellect is not exempt from the universal laws of our conceptive faculty. If daily habit presents to him for a long period two facts in combination, and if he is not led, during that period, either by accident or intention, to think of them apart, he will in time become incapable of doing so, even by the strongest effort; and the supposition, that the two facts can be separated in nature, will at last present itself to his mind with all the characters of an inconceivable phenomenon. There are remarkable instances of this in the history of science; instances in which the wisest men rejected as impossible, because inconceivable, things which their posterity, by earlier practice, and longer perseverance in the attempt, found it quite easy to conceive, and which every body now knows to be true. There was a time when men of the most cultivated intellects, and the most emancipated from the dominion of early prejudice, could not credit the existence of antipodes; were unable

to conceive, in opposition to old association, the force of gravity acting upwards instead of downwards. The Cartesians long rejected the Newtonian doctrine of the gravitation of all bodies towards one another, on the faith of a general proposition, the reverse of which seemed to them to be inconceivable—the proposition, that a body cannot act where it is not. All the cumbrous machinery of imaginary vortices, assumed without the smallest particle of evidence, appeared to these philosophers a more rational mode of explaining the heavenly motions, than one which involved what appeared to them so great an absurdity. And they, no doubt, found it as impossible to conceive that a body should act upon the earth at the distance of the sun or moon, as we find it to conceive an end to space or time, or two straight lines inclosing a space. Newton himself had not been able to realize the conception, or we should not have had his hypothesis of a subtle ether, the occult cause of gravitation; and his writings prove, that although he deemed the particular nature of the intermediate agency a matter of conjecture, the necessity of *some* such agency appeared to him indubitable. It would seem that, even now, the majority of scientific men have not completely got over this very difficulty; for though they have at last learned to conceive the sun *attracting* the earth without any intervening fluid, they cannot yet conceive the sun *illuminating* the earth without some such medium.

"If, then, it be so natural to the human mind, even in its highest state of culture, to be incapable of conceiving, and on that ground to believe impossible, what is afterwards not

only found to be conceivable, but proved to be true; what wonder if, in cases where the association is still older, more confirmed, and more familiar, and in which nothing even occurs to shake our conviction, or even to suggest to us any conception at variance with the association, the acquired incapacity should continue, and be mistaken for a natural incapacity? It is true our experience of the varieties in nature enables us, within certain limits, to conceive other varieties analogous to them. We can conceive the sun or moon falling, for although we never saw them fall, nor ever perhaps imagined them falling, we have seen so many other things fall, that we have innumerable familiar analogies to assist the conception; which, after all, we should probably have some difficulty in framing, were we not well accustomed to see the sun and moon move, (or appear to move,) so that we are only called upon to conceive a slight change in the direction of motion, a circumstance familiar to our experience. But when experience affords no model on which to shape the new conception, how is it possible for us to form it? How, for example, can we imagine an end to space and time? We never saw any object without something beyond it, nor experienced any feeling without something following it. When, therefore, we attempt to conceive the last point of space, we have the idea irresistibly raised of other points beyond it. When we try to imagine the last instant of time, we cannot help conceiving another instant after it. Nor is there any necessity to assume, as is done by the school to which Mr Whewell belongs, a peculiar fundamental law of the mind to account for the feeling of

> infinity inherent in our conception of space and time; that apparent infinity is sufficiently accounted for by simple and universally acknowledged laws."—Vol. I. p. 313.

Mr Mill does not deny that there exists a distinction, as regards ourselves, between certain truths (namely, that of some, we cannot conceive them to be other than truths,) but he sets no value on this distinction, inasmuch as there is no proof that it has its counterpart in things themselves; the impossibility of a thing being by no means measured by our inability to conceive it. And we may observe, that Mr Whewell, in consistency with the metaphysical doctrine upon space and time which he has borrowed from Kant, ought, under another shape, to entertain a similar doubt as to whether this distinction represent any real distinction in the nature of things. He considers, with Kant, that space is only that *form* with which the human mind invests things—that it has no other than this merely mental existence —is purely subjective. Presuming, therefore, that the mind is, from its constitution, utterly and for ever unable to conceive the opposite of certain truths, (those, for instance, of geometry;) yet as the existence of space itself is but a subjective truth, it must follow that all other truths relating to it are subjective also. The mind is not conversant with things in themselves, in the truths even of geometry; nor is there any positive objective truth in one department of science more than another. Mr Whewell, therefore, though he advocates this distinction between necessary and contingent truth with a zeal which would seem to imply that

something momentous, or of peculiar interest, was connected with it, can advocate it only as a matter of abstract metaphysical science. He cannot participate in that feeling of exaltation and mystery which has led many to expatiate upon a necessary and absolute truth which the Divine Power itself cannot alter, which is equally irresistible, equally binding and compulsory, with God as with man. Of this spirit of philosophical enthusiasm Mr Whewell cannot partake. Space and Time, with all their properties and phenomena, are but recognized as the modes of thought of a human intelligence.

We have marked a number of passages for annotation and extract—a far greater number than we can possibly find place for alluding to. One subject, however, which lies at the very basis of all our science, and which has received a proportionate attention from Mr Mill, must not be amongst those which are passed over. We mean the law of *Causation*. What should be described as the complete and adequate notion of a cause, we need not say is one of the moot points of philosophy. According to one school of metaphysicians, there is in our notion of cause an element not derived from experience, which, it is confessed on all hands, can teach us only the *succession* of events. Cause, with them, is that invisible power, that mysterious bond, which this succession does but signify: with other philosophers this succession constitutes the whole of any intelligible notion we have of cause. The latter opinion is that of Mr Mill; at the same time the question is one which lies beyond or beside the scope

of his volumes. He is concerned only with phenomena, not with the knowledge (if such there be) of "things in themselves;" that part, therefore, of our idea of cause which, according to all systems of philosophy, is won from experience, and concerns phenomena alone, is sufficient for his purpose. That every event has a cause, that is, a previous and uniformly previous event, and that whatever has happened will, in the like circumstances, happen again—these are the assumptions necessary to science, and these no one will dispute.

Mr Mill has made a happy addition to the usual definition of cause given by that class of metaphysicians to which he himself belongs, and which obviates a plausible objection urged against it by Dr Reid and others. These have argued, that if cause be nothing more than invariable antecedence, then night may be said to be the cause of day, for the one invariably precedes the other. Day does succeed to night, but only on certain conditions —namely, that the sun rise. "The succession," observes Mr Mill, "which is equivalent and synonymous to cause, must be not only invariable but unconditional. We may define, therefore," says our author, "the cause of a phenomenon to be the antecedent, or the concurrence of antecedents, upon which it is invariably and *unconditionally* consequent."—Vol. I. p. 411.

A dilemma may be raised of this kind. The universality of the law of causation—in other words, the uniform course of nature —is the fundamental principle on which all induction proceeds, the great premise on which all our science is founded. But if

this law itself be the result only of experience, itself only a great instance of induction, so long as nature presents cases requiring investigation, where the causes are unknown to us, so long the law itself is imperfectly established. How, then, can this law be a guide and a premiss in the investigations of science, when those investigations are necessary to complete the proof of the law itself? How can this principle accompany and authorise every step we take in science, which itself needs confirmation so long as a process of induction remains to be performed? Or how can this law be established by a series of inductions, in making which it has been taken for granted?

Objections which wear the air of a quibble have often this advantage—they put our knowledge to the test. The obligation to find a complete answer clears up our own conceptions. The observations which Mr Mill makes on this point, we shall quote at length. They are taken from his chapter on the *Evidence of the Law of Universal Causation*; the views in which are as much distinguished for boldness as for precision.

After having said, that in all the several methods of induction the universality of the law of causation is assumed, he continues: —

> "But is this assumption warranted? Doubtless (it may be said) *most* phenomena are connected as effects with some antecedent or cause—that is, are never produced unless some assignable fact has preceded them; but the very circumstance, that complicated processes of induction are

sometimes necessary, shows that cases exist in which this regular order of succession is not apparent to our first and simplest apprehension. If, then, the processes which bring these cases within the same category with the rest, require that we should assume the universality of the very law which they do not at first sight appear to exemplify, is not this a real *petitio principii*? Can we prove a proposition by an argument which takes it for granted? And, if not so proved, on what evidence does it rest?

"For this difficulty, which I have purposely stated in the strongest terms it would admit of, the school of metaphysicians, who have long predominated in this country, find a ready salvo. They affirm that the universality of causation is a truth which we cannot help believing; that the belief in it is an instinct, one of the laws of our believing faculty. As the proof of this they say, and they have nothing else to say, that every body *does* believe it; and they number it among the propositions, rather numerous in their catalogue, which may be logically argued against, and perhaps cannot be logically proved, but which are of higher authority than logic, and which even he who denies in speculation, shows by his habitual practice that his arguments make no impression on himself.

"I have no intention of entering into the merits of this question, as a problem of transcendental metaphysics. But I must renew my protest against adducing, as evidence of the truth of a fact in external nature, any necessity which the human mind may be conceived to be under of believing it. It is the business of human intellect to adapt itself to the

realities of things, and not to measure those realities by its own capacities of comprehension. The same quality which fits mankind for the offices and purposes of their own little life, the tendency of their belief to follow their experience, incapacitates them for judging of what lies beyond. Not only what man can know, but what he can conceive, depends upon what he has experienced. Whatever forms a part of all his experience, forms a part also of all his conceptions, and appears to him universal and necessary, though really, for aught he knows, having no existence beyond certain narrow limits. The habit, however, of philosophical analysis, of which it is the surest effect to enable the mind to command, instead of being commanded by, the laws of the merely passive part of its own nature, and which, by showing to us that things are not necessarily connected in fact because their ideas are connected in our minds, is able to loosen innumerable associations which reign despotically over the undisciplined mind; this habit is not without power even over those associations which the philosophical school, of which I have been speaking, regard as connate and instinctive. I am convinced that any one accustomed to abstraction and analysis, who will fairly exert his faculties for the purpose, will, when his imagination has once learned to entertain the notion, find no difficulty in conceiving that in some one, for instance, of the many firmaments into which sidereal astronomy now divides the universe, events may succeed one another at random, without any fixed law; nor can any thing in our experience, or in our mental nature, constitute a sufficient, or indeed any, reason for believing

that this is nowhere the case. The grounds, therefore, which warrant us in rejecting such a supposition with respect to any of the phenomena of which we have experience, must be sought elsewhere than in any supposed necessity of our intellectual faculties.

"As was observed in a former place, the belief we entertain in the universality, throughout nature, of the law of cause and effect, is itself an instance of induction; and by no means one of the earliest which any of us, or which mankind in general, can have made. We arrive at this universal law by generalisation from many laws of inferior generality. The generalising propensity which, instinctive or not, is one of the most powerful principles of our nature, does not indeed wait for the period when such a generalisation becomes strictly legitimate. The mere unreasoning propensity to expect what has been often experienced, doubtless led men to believe that every thing had a cause, before they could have conclusive evidence of that truth. But even this cannot be supposed to have happened until many cases of causation, or, in other words, many partial uniformities of sequence, had become familiar. The more obvious of the particular uniformities suggest and prove the general uniformity; and that general uniformity, once established, enables us to prove the remainder of the particular uniformities of which it is made up. * * *

"With respect to the general law of causation, it does appear that there must have been a time when the universal prevalence of that law throughout nature could not have been affirmed in the same confident and unqualified

manner as at present. There was a time when many of the phenomena of nature must have appeared altogether capricious and irregular, not governed by any laws, nor steadily consequent upon any causes. Such phenomena, indeed, were commonly, in that early stage of human knowledge, ascribed to the direct intervention of the will of some supernatural being, and therefore still to a cause. This shows the strong tendency of the human mind to ascribe every phenomenon to some cause or other; but it shows also that experience had not, at that time, pointed out any regular order in the occurrence of those particular phenomena, nor proved them to be, as we now know that they are, dependent upon prior phenomena as their proximate causes. There have been sects of philosophers who have admitted what they termed Chance as one of the agents in the order of nature by which certain classes of events were entirely regulated; which could only mean that those events did not occur in any fixed order, or depend upon uniform laws of causation. * * *

"The progress of experience, therefore, has dissipated the doubt which must have rested upon the universality of the law of causation, while there were phenomena which seemed to be *sui generis*; not subject to the same laws with any other class of phenomena, and not as yet ascertained to have peculiar laws of their own. This great generalisation, however, might reasonably have been, as it in fact was by all great thinkers, acted upon as a probability of the highest order, before there were sufficient grounds for receiving it as a certainty. For, whatever has been found

> true in innumerable instances, and never found to be false after due examination in any, we are safe in acting upon as universal provisionally, until an undoubted exception appears; provided the nature of the case be such that a real exception could scarcely have escaped our notice. When every phenomenon that we ever knew sufficiently well to be able to answer the question, had a cause on which it was invariably consequent, it was more rational to suppose that our inability to assign the causes of other phenomena arose from our ignorance, than that there were phenomena which were uncaused, and which happened accidentally to be exactly those which we had hitherto had no sufficient opportunity of studying."—Vol. II. p. 108.

Hypotheses.—Mr Mill's observations on the use of hypotheses in scientific investigation, except that they are characterized by his peculiar distinctness and accuracy of thought, do not differ from the views generally entertained by writers on the subject. We are induced to refer to the topic, to point out what seems to us a harsh measure dealt out to the undulatory theory of light —harsh when compared with the reception given to a theory of Laplace, having for its object to account for the origin of the planetary system.

We had occasion to quote a passage from Mr Mill, in which he remarks that the majority of scientific men seem not yet to have completely got over the difficulty of conceiving matter to act (contrary to the old maxim) where it is not; "for though," he says, "they have at last learned to conceive the sun *attracting*

the earth without any intervening fluid, they cannot yet conceive the sun *illuminating* the earth without some such medium." But it is not only this difficulty (which doubtless, however, is felt) of conceiving the sun illuminating the earth without any medium by which to communicate its influence, which leads to the construction of the hypothesis, either of an undulating ether, or of emitted particles. The analogy of the other senses conducts us almost irresistibly to the imagination of some such medium. The nerves of sense are, apparently, in all cases that we can satisfactorily investigate, affected by contact, by impulse. The nerve of sight itself, we know, when touched or pressed upon, gives out the sensation of light. These reasons, in the first place, conduct us to the supposition of some medium, having immediate communication with the eye; which medium, though we are far from saying that its existence is established, is rendered probable by the explanation it affords of optical phenomena. At the same time it is evident that the hypothesis of an undulating ether, assumes a fluid or some medium, the existence of which cannot be directly ascertained. Thus stands the hypothesis of a luminiferous ether—in what must be allowed to be a very unsatisfactory condition. But a condition, we think, very superior to the astronomical speculation of Laplace, which Mr Mill, after scrutinizing the preceding hypothesis with the utmost strictness, is disposed to treat with singular indulgence.

> "The speculation is," we may as well quote throughout Mr Mill's words, "that the atmosphere of the sun originally

extended to the present limits of the solar system: from which, by the process of cooling, it has contracted to its present dimensions; and since, by the general principles of mechanics, the rotation of the sun and its accompanying atmosphere must increase as rapidly as its volume diminishes, the increased centrifugal force generated by the more rapid rotation, overbalancing the action of gravitation, would cause the sun to abandon successive rings of vaporous matter, which are supposed to have condensed by cooling, and to have become our planets.

"There is in this theory," Mr Mill proceeds, "no unknown substance introduced upon supposition, nor any unknown property or law ascribed to a known substance. The known laws of matter authorize us to suppose, that a body which is constantly giving out so large an amount of heat as the sun is, must be progressively cooling, and that by the process of cooling it must contract; if, therefore, we endeavour, from the present state of that luminary, to infer its state in a time long past, we must necessarily suppose that its atmosphere extended much further than at present, and we are entitled to suppose that it extended as far as we can trace those effects which it would naturally leave behind it on retiring; and such the planets are. These suppositions being made, it follows from known laws that successive zones of the solar atmosphere would be abandoned; that these would continue to revolve round the sun with the same velocity as when they formed part of his substance, and that they would cool down, long before the sun himself, to any given temperature, and consequently to that at which the

greater part of the vaporous matter of which they consisted would become liquid or solid. The known law of gravitation would then cause them to agglomerate in masses, which would assume the shape our planets actually exhibit; would acquire, each round its own axis, a rotatory movement; and would in that state revolve, as the planets actually do, about the sun, in the same direction with the sun's rotation, but with less velocity, and each of them in the same periodic time which the sun's rotation occupied when his atmosphere extended to that point; and this also M. Comte has, by the necessary calculations, ascertained to be true, within certain small limits of error. There is thus in Laplace's theory nothing hypothetical; it is an example of legitimate reasoning from a present effect to its past cause, according to the known laws of that case; it assumes nothing more than that objects which really exist, obey the laws which are known to be obeyed by all terrestrial objects resembling them."—Vol. II. p. 27.

Now, it seems to us that there is quite as much of hypothesis in this speculation of Laplace as in the undulatory theory of light. This atmosphere of the sun extending to the utmost limits of our planetary system! What proof have we that it ever existed? what possible grounds have we for believing, what motive even for imagining such a thing, but the very same description of proof given and rejected for the existence of a luminiferous ether —namely, that it enables us to explain certain events supposed to result from it? Nor is the thing here imagined any the less a novelty, because it bears the old name of an atmosphere.

An atmosphere containing in itself all the various materials which compose our earth, and whatever else may enter into the composition of the other planets, is as violent a supposition as an ether, not perceptible to the senses except by its influence on the nerves of sight. And this cooling down of the sun! What fact in our experience enables us to advance such a supposition? We might as well say that the sun was getting hotter every year, or harder or softer, or larger or smaller. Surely Mr Mill could not have been serious when he says, that "the known laws of matter authorize us to suppose, that a body which is constantly *giving out so large an amount of heat* as the sun is, must be progressively cooling"—knowing, as we do, as little how the sun occasions heat as how it produces light. Neither can it be contended that because no absolutely new substance, or new property of matter, is introduced, but a fantastic conception is framed out of known substances and known properties, that therefore there is less of rash conjecture in the supposition. In fine, it must be felt by every one who reads the account of this speculation of Laplace, that the only evidence which produces the least effect upon his mind, is the corroboration which it receives from the calculations of the mathematician—a species of proof which Mr Mill himself would not estimate very highly.

Many are the topics which are made to reflect a new light as Mr Mill passes along his lengthened course; we might quote as instances, his chapters on *Analogy* and the *Calculation of Chances*: and many are the grave and severe discussions that

would await us were we to proceed to the close of his volumes, especially to that portion of his work where he applies the canons of science to investigations which relate to human nature and the characters of men. But enough for the present. We repeat, in concluding, the same sentiment that we expressed at the commencement, that such a work as this goes far to redeem the literature of our age from the charge of frivolity and superficiality. Those who have been trained in a different school of thinking, those who have adopted the metaphysics of the transcendental philosophy, will find much in these volumes to dissent from; but no man, be his pretensions or his tenets what they may, who has been accustomed to the study of philosophy, can fail to recognize and admire in this author that acute, patient, enlarged, and persevering thought, which gives to him who possesses it the claim and right to the title of philosopher. There are few men who—applying it to his own species of excellence—might more safely repeat the *Io sono anche!* of the celebrated Florentine.

MY COUNTRY NEIGHBOURS

People are fond of talking of the hereditary feuds of Italy—the factions of the Capulets and Montagues, the Orsini and Colonne—and, more especially, of the memorable *Vendette* of Corsica—as if hatred and revenge were solely endemic in the regions of

"The Pyrenean and the river Po!"

Mere prejudice! There is as good hating going on in England as elsewhere. Independent of the personal antipathies generated by politics, the envy, hatred, and malice arising out of every election contest, not a country neighbourhood but has its raging factions; and Browns and Smiths often cherish and maintain an antagonism every whit as bitter as that of the sanguinary progenitors of Romeo and Juliet.

I, for instance, who am but a country gentleman in a small way—an obscure bachelor, abiding from year's end to year's end on my insignificant farm—have witnessed things in my time, which, had they been said and done nearer the tropics, would have been cited far and near in evidence of the turbulence of human passions, and that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Seeing that they chanced in a homely parish in Cheshire, no one has been at the trouble to note their strangeness; though, to own the truth, none but the actors in

the drama (besides myself, a solitary spectator) are cognizant of its incidents and catastrophe. I might boast, indeed, that I alone am thoroughly in the secret; for it is the spectator only who competently judges the effects of a scene; and merely changing the names, for reasons easily conceivable, I ask leave to relate in the simplest manner a few facts in evidence of my assertion, that England has its Capuletti e Montecchi as well as Verona.

In the first place, let me premise that I am neither of a condition of life, nor condition of mind, to mingle as a friend with those of whose affairs I am about to treat so familiarly, being far too crotchety a fellow not to prefer a saunter with my fishing-tackle on my back, or an evening tête-à-tête with my library of quaint old books, to all the good men's feasts ever eaten at the cost of a formal country visit. Nevertheless, I am not so cold of heart as to be utterly devoid of interest in the destinies of those whose turrets I see peering over the woods that encircle my corn-fields; and as the good old housekeeper, who for these thirty years past has presided over my household, happens to have grandchildren high in service in what are called the two great families in the neighbourhood, scarcely an event or incident passes within their walls that does not find an echo in mine. So much in attestation of my authority. But for such an introduction behind the scenes, much of the stage business of this curious drama would have escaped my notice, or remained incomprehensible.

I am wrong to say the two great "families;" I should have said

the two great "houses." At the close of the last century, indeed, our parish of Lexley contained but one; one which had stood there since the days of the first James, nay, even earlier—a fine old manorial hall of grand dimensions and stately architecture, of the species of mixed Gothic so false in taste, but so ornamental in effect, which is considered as betraying the first symptoms of Italian innovation.

The gardens extending in the rear of the house were still more decidedly in the Italian taste, having clipped evergreens and avenues of pyramidal yews, which, combined with the intervening statues, imparted to them something of the air of a cemetery. There were fountains, too, which, in the memory of man, had been never known to play, the marble basins being, if possible, still greener than the grim visages of the fauns and dryads standing forlorn on their dilapidated pedestals amid the neglected alleys.

The first thing I can remember of Lexley Hall, was peeping as a child through the stately iron gratings of the garden, that skirted a by-road leading from my grandfather's farm. The desolateness of the place overawed my young heart. In summer time the parterres were overgrown into a wilderness. The plants threw up their straggling arms so high, that the sunshine could hardly find its way to the quaint old dial that stood there telling its tale of time, though no man regarded; and the cordial fragrance of the strawberry-beds, mingling with entangled masses of honeysuckle in their exuberance of midsummer blossom, seemed to mock me,

as I loitered in the dusk near the old gateway, with the tantalizing illusions of a fairy-tale—the Barmecide's feast, or Prince Desire surveying his princess through the impermeable walls of her crystal palace.

But if the enjoyment of the melancholy old gardens of Lexley Hall were withheld from *me*, no one else seemed to find pleasure or profit therein. Sir Laurence Altham, the lord of the manor and manor-house, was seldom resident in the country. Though a man of mature years, (I speak of the close of the last century,) he was still a man of pleasure—the ruined hulk of the gallant vessel which, early in the reign of George III., had launched itself with unequalled brilliancy on the sparkling current of London life.

At that time, I have heard my grandfather say there was not a mortgage on the Lexley estate! The timber was notoriously the finest in the county. A whole navy was comprised in one of its coppices; and the arching avenues were imposing as the aisles of our Gothic minsters. Alas! it needed the lapse of only half a dozen years to lay bare to the eye of every casual traveller the ancient mansion, so long

> "Bosom'd high in tufted trees,"

and only guessed at till you approached the confines of the court-yard.

It was hazard that effected this. The dice-box swept those noble avenues from the face of the estate. Soon after Sir

Laurence's coming of age, almost before the church-bells had ceased to announce the joyous event of the attainment of his majority, he was off to the Continent—Paris—Italy—I know not where, and was thenceforward only occasionally heard of in Cheshire as the ornament of the Sardinian or Austrian courts. But these tidings were usually accompanied by a shaking of the head from the old family steward. The timber was to be thinned anew—the tenants to be again amerced. Sir Laurence evidently looked upon the Lexley property as a mere hotbed for his vices. At last the old steward turned surly to our enquiries, and would answer no further questions concerning his master. My grandfather's small farm was the only plot of ground in the parish that did not belong to the estate; and from him the faithful old servant was as careful to conceal the family disgraces, as to maintain the honour of Sir Laurence's name in the ears of his grumbling tenants.

The truth, however, could not long be withheld. Chaisefuls of suspicious-looking men in black arrived at the hall; loungers, surveyors, auctioneers—I know not what. There was talk in the parish about foreclosing a mortgage, no one exactly understood why, or by whom. But it was soon clear that Wightman, the old steward, was no longer the great man at Lexley. These strangers bade him come here and go there exactly as they chose, and, unhappily, they saw fit to make his comings and goings so frequent and so humiliating, that before the close of the summer the old servitor betook himself to his rest in a spot where all men cease from troubling. The leaves that dreary autumn fell upon

his grave.

According to my grandfather's account, however, few even of his village contemporaries grieved for old Wightman. They felt that Providence knew best; that the old man was happily spared the mortification of all that was likely to ensue. For before another year was out the ring fence, which had hitherto encircled the Lexley property, was divided within itself; a paltry distribution of about a hundred acres alone remaining attached to the old hall. The rest was gone! The rest was the property of the foreclosee of that hateful mortgage.

Within view of the battlements of the old manor-house, nearly a hundred workmen were soon employed in digging the foundations of a modern mansion of the noblest proportions. The new owner of the estate, though only a manufacturer from Congleton, chose to dwell in a palace; and by the time his splendid Doric temple was complete, under the name of Lexley Park, the vain-glorious proprietor, Mr Sparks, had taken his seat in Parliament for a neighbouring borough.

Little was known of him in the neighbourhood beyond his name and calling; yet already his new tenants were prepared to oppose and dislike him. Though they knew quite as little personally of the young baronet by whom they had been sold into bondage to the unpopular clothier—him, with the caprice of ignorance, they chose to prefer. They were proud of the old family—proud of the hereditary lords of the soil—proud of a name connecting itself with the glories of the reign of

Elizabeth, and the loyalty shining, like a sepulchral lamp, through the gloomy records of the House of Stuart. The banners and escutcheons of the Althams were appended in their parish church. The family vault sounded hollow under their head whenever they approached its altar. Where was the burial-place of the manufacturer? In what obscure churchyard existed the mouldering heap that covered the remains of the sires of Mr Jonas Sparks? Certainly not at Lexley! Lexley knew not, and cared not to know, either him or his. It was no fault of the parish that its young baronet had proved a spendthrift and alienated the inheritance of his fathers; and, but that he had preserved the manor-house from desecration, they would perhaps have ostracized him altogether, as having lent his aid to disgrace their manor with so noble a structure as the porticoed façade of Lexley Park!

Meanwhile the shrewd Jonas was fully aware of his unpopularity and its origin; and, during a period of three years, he allowed his ill-advised subjects to chew, unmolested, the cud of their discontent. Having a comfortable residence at the further extremity of the county, he visited Lexley only to overlook the works, or notice the placing of the costly new furniture; and the grumblers began to fancy they were to profit as little by their new masters as by their old. The steward who replaced the trusty Wightman, and had been instructed to legislate among the cottages with a lighter hand, and distribute Christmas benefaction in a double proportion, was careful to

circulate in the parish an impression that Mr Sparks and his family did not care to inhabit the new house till the gardens were in perfect order, the succession houses in full bearing, and the mansion thoroughly seasoned. But the Lexleyans guessed the truth, that he had no mind to confront the first outbreak of their ill-will.

Nearly four years elapsed before he took possession of the place; four years, during which Sir Laurence Altham had never set foot in the hall, and was heard of only through his follies and excesses; and when Mr Sparks at length made his appearance, with his handsome train of equipages, and surrounded by his still handsomer family, so far from meeting him with sullen silence, the tenantry began to regret that they had not erected a triumphal arch of evergreens for his entrance into the park, as had been proposed by the less eager of the Althamites.

After all, their former prejudice in favour of the young baronet was based on very shallow foundations. What had he ever done for them except raise their rents, and prosecute their trespasses? It was nothing that his forefathers had endowed almshouses for their support, or served up banquets for their delectation—Sir Laurence was an absentee—Sir Laurence was as the son of the stranger. The fine old kennel stood cold and empty, reminding them that to preserve their foxes was no longer an article of Lexley religion; and if any of the old October, brewed at the birth of the present baronet, still filled the oaken hogsheads in the cellars of the hall, what mattered it to them? No chance of

their being broached, unless to grace the funeral feast of the lord of the manor.

To Jonas Sparks, Esq. M.P., accordingly, they dedicated their allegiance. A few additional chaldrons of coals and pairs of blankets, the first frosty winter, bound them his slaves for ever. Food, physic, and wine, were liberally distributed to the sick and aged whenever they repaired for relief to the Doric portico; and, with the usual convenient memory of the vulgar, the Lexleyans soon began to remember of the Altham family only their recent backslidings and ancient feudal oppressions: while of the Sparkses they chose to know only what was evident to all eyes—viz., that their hands were open and faces comely.

Into their hearts—more especially into that of Jonas, the head of the house—they examined not at all; and were ill-qualified to surmise the intensity of bitterness with which, while contemplating the beauty and richness of his new domain, he beheld the turrets of the old hall rising like a statue of scorn above the intervening woods. There stood the everlasting monument of the ancient family—there the emblem of their pride, throwing its shadow, as it were, over his dawning prosperity! But for that force of contrast thus afforded, he would scarcely have perceived the newness of all the objects around him—the glare of the fresh freestone—the nakedness of the whited walls. A few stately old oaks and elms, apparently coeval with the ancient structure, which a sort of religious feeling had preserved from the axe, that they might afford congenial shade to the successor

of its founder, seemed to impart meanness and vulgarity to the tapering verdure of *his* plantations, his modern trees—his pert poplars and mean larches—his sycamores and planes. Even the incongruity between his solid new paling and the decayed and sun-bleached wood of the venerable fence to which it adjoined, with its hoary beard of silvery lichen, was an eyesore to him. Every passer-by might note the limit and circumscription dividing the new place from the ancient seat of the lords of the manor.

Yet was the landscape of Lexley Park one of almost unequalled beauty. The Dee formed noble ornament to its sweeping valleys; while the noble acclivities were clothed with promising woods, opening by rich vistas to a wide extent of champaign country. A fine bridge of granite, erected by the late Sir Windsor Altham, formed a noble object from the windows of the new mansion; and but for the evidence of the venerable pile, that stood like an abdicated monarch surveying its lost dominions, there existed no external demonstration that Lexley Park had not from the beginning of time formed the estated seat of the Sparkses.

The neighbouring families, if "neighbouring" could be called certain of the nobility and gentry who resided at ten miles' distance, were courteously careful to inspire the new settler with a belief that they at least had forgotten any antecedent state of things at Lexley; for they had even reason to congratulate themselves on the change. Jonas had long been strenuously active

in the House of Commons in promoting county improvements. Jonas was useful as a magistrate, and invaluable as a liberal contributor to the local charities. During the first five years of his occupancy, he did more for Lexley and its inhabitants than the half-dozen previous baronets of the House of Altham.

Of the man he had superseded, meanwhile, it was observed that Mr Sparks was judiciously careful to forbear all mention. It might have been supposed that he had purchased the estate of the Crown or the Court of Chancery, so utterly ignorant did he appear of the age, habits, and whereabout of his predecessor; and when informed by Sir John Wargrane, one of his wealthy neighbours, that young Altham was disgracing himself again—that at the public gaming-tables at Toplitz he had been a loser of thirty thousand pounds—the cunning *parvenu* listened with an air of as vague indifference as if he were not waiting with breathless anxiety the gradual dissipation of the funds, secured to the young spendthrift by the transfer of his estate, to grasp at the small remaining portion of his property. Unconsciously, when the tale of Sir Laurence's profligacy met his ear, he clenched his griping hand, as though it already recognized its hold upon the destined spoil, but not a word did he utter.

Meanwhile, the family of the new squire of Lexley were winning golden opinions on all sides. "The boys were brave—the girls were fair," the mother virtuous, pious, and unpretending. It would have been scandalous, indeed, to sneer to shame the modest cheerfulness of such people, because their ancestors

had not fought at the Crusades. By degrees, they assumed an honourable and even eminent position in the county; and the first time Sir Laurence Altham condescended to visit the county-palatine, he heard nothing but commendations and admiration of the charming family at Lexley Park.

"Charming family!—a Jonas Sparks, and charming!" was his supercilious reply. "I rejoice to find that the *fumier* I have been forced to fling on my worn-out ancestral estate is fertilizing its barrenness. The village is probably the better for the change. But, as regards the society, I must be permitted to mistrust the attractions of the brood of a Congleton manufacturer."

The young baronet, who now, though still entitled to be called young, was disfigured by the premature defeatures of a vicious life, mistrusted it all the more, when, on visiting the old hall, he was forced to recognize the improvements effected in the neighbouring property (that he should be forced to call it "*neighbouring*!") by the judicious administration of the new owner. It was impossible to deny that Mr Sparks had doubled its value, while enhancing its beauties. The low grounds were drained, the high lands planted, the river widened, the forestry systematically organized. The estate appeared to have attained new strength and vigour when dissevered from the old manor-house; whose shadow might be supposed to have exercised a baleful influence on the lands wherever it presided.

But it was not his recognition of this that was likely to animate the esteem of Sir Laurence Altham for Mr Jonas Sparks. On the

contrary, he felt every accession of value to the Lexley property as so much subtracted from his belongings; and his detestation of the upstarts, whose fine mansion was perceptible from his lordly towers—like a blot upon the fairness of the landscape—increased with the increase of their prosperity.

Without having expected to take delight in a sojourn at Lexley Hall—a spot where he had only resided for a few weeks now and then, from the period of his early boyhood—he was not prepared for the excess of irritation that arose in his heart on witnessing the total estrangement of the retainers of his family. For the mortification of seeing a fine new house, with gorgeous furniture, and a pompous establishment, he came armed to the teeth. But no presentiments had forewarned him, that at Lexley the living Althams were already as much forgotten as those who were sleeping in the family vault. The sudden glow that pervaded his whole frame when he chanced to encounter on the highroad the rich equipage of the Sparkses; or the imprecation that burst from his lips, when, on going to the window of a morning to examine the state of the weather for the day, the first objects that struck him was the fair mansion in the plain below, laughing as it were in the sunshine, the deer grouped under its fine old trees, and the river rippling past its lawns as if delighting in their verdure–Yes! there was decided animosity betwixt the hill and the valley.

Every successive season served to quicken the pulses of this growing hatred. Whether on the spot or at a distance, a thousand

aggravations sprang up betwixt the parties: disputes between gamekeepers, quarrels between labourers, encroachments by tenants. Every thing and nothing was made the groundwork of ill-will. To Sir Laurence Altham's embittered feelings, the very rooks of Lexley Park seemed evermore to infringe upon the privileges of the rookery at Lexley Hall; and when, in the parish church, the new squire (or rather his workmen, for he was absent at the time attending his duties in Parliament) inadvertently broke off the foot of a marble cherub, weeping its alabaster tears, at the angle of a monument to the memory of a certain Sir Wilfred Altham, of the time of James II., in raising the woodwork of a pew occupied by Mr Sparks's family, the rage of Sir Laurence was so excessive as to be almost deserving of a strait-waistcoat.

The enmity of the baronet was all the more painful to himself that he felt it to be harmless against its object. In every way, Lexley Park had the best of it. Jonas Sparks was not only rich in a noble income, but in a charming wife and promising family. Every thing prospered with him; and, as to mere inferiority of precedence, it was well known that he had refused a baronetcy; and many people even surmised that, so soon as he was able to purchase another borough, and give a seat in Parliament to his second son, as well as resign his own to the eldest, he would be promoted to the Upper House.

The only means of vengeance, therefore, possessed by the vindictive man whose follies and vices had been the means of creating this perpetual scourge to his pride, was withholding

from him the purchase of the remaining lands indispensable to the completion of his estate, more especially as regarded the water-courses, which, at Lexley Park, were commanded by the sluices of the higher grounds of the Hall; and mighty was the oath sworn by Sir Laurence, that come what might, however great his exigencies or threatening his poverty, nothing should induce him to dispose of another acre to Jonas Sparks. He was even at the trouble of executing a will, in order to introduce a clause imposing the same reservation upon the man to whom he devised his small remaining property—the heir-at-law, to whom, had he died intestate, it would have descended without conditions.

"The Congleton shopkeepers," muttered he, (whenever, in his solitary evening rides, he caught sight of the rich plate-glass windows of the new mansion, burnished by the setting sun,) "shall never, never lord it under the roof of my forefathers! Wherever else he may set his plebeian foot, Lexley Hall shall be sacred. Rather see the old place burned to the ground—rather set fire to it with my own hands—than conceive that, when I am in my grave, it could possibly be subjected to the rule of such a barbarian!"

For it had reached the ears of Sir Laurence—of course, with all the exaggeration derived from passing through the medium of village gossip—that a thousand local legends concerning the venerable mansion, sanctified by their antiquity in the ears of the family, afforded a fertile source of jesting to Jonas Sparks. The Hall abounded in concealed staircases and iron hiding-

places, connected with a variety of marvellous traditions of the civil wars; besides a walled-up suite of chambers, haunted, as becomes a walled-up suite of chambers; and justice-rooms and tapestried-rooms, to which the long abandonment of the house, and the heated imaginations of the few menials left in charge of its desolate vastness, attributed romances likely enough to have provoked the laughter of a matter-of-fact man like the owner of Lexley Park. But neither Sir Laurence nor his old servants were likely to forgive this insult offered to the family legends of a house which had little else left to boast of. Even the neighbouring families were displeased to hear them derided; and my grandfather never liked to hear a joke on the subject of the coach-and-four which was said to have driven into the court-yard of the Hall on the eve of the execution of the rebel lords in 1745, having four headless inmates, who were duly welcomed as guests by old Sir Robert Altham. Nay, as a child, I had so often thrilled on my nurse's knees during the relation of this spectral visitation, that I own I felt indignant if any one presumed to laugh at a tale which had made me quake for fear.

Among those who were known to resent the familiar tone in which Mr Sparks had been heard to criticise the pomps and vanities exhibited at Lexley Hall by the Althams of the olden time, was a certain General Stanley, who, inhabiting a fine seat of his own at about ten miles' distance, was fond of bringing over his visitors to visit the old Hall, as an interesting specimen of county antiquity. *He* knew the peculiarities of the place, and could repeat

the traditions connected with the hiding-places better than the housekeeper herself; and I have heard her say it was a pleasure to hear him relating these historical anecdotes with all the fire of an old soldier, and see his venerable grey hair blown about as he stood with his party on the battlements, pointing out to the ladies the fine range of territory formerly belonging to the Althams. The old lady protested that the general was nearly as much grieved as herself to behold the old mansion so shorn of its beams; and certain it is, that once when, on visiting the hall after Sir Laurence had been some years an absentee, he found the grass growing among the disjointed stones of the cloisters and justice-hall, he made a handsome present to one of the housekeeper's nephews, on condition of his keeping the purlieus of the venerable mansion free from such disgraceful evidences of neglect.

All this eventually reached the ears of the baronet; but instead of making him angry, as might have been expected, from one so tetchy and susceptible, he never encountered General Stanley, either in town or country, without demonstrations of respect. Though too reserved and morose for conversation, Sir Laurence was observed to take off his hat to him with a respect he was never seen to show towards the king or queen.

About this time I began to take personal interest in the affairs of the neighbourhood, though my own were now of a nature to engross my attention. By my grandfather's death, I had recently come into the enjoyment of the small inheritance which

has sufficed to the happiness of my life; and, renouncing the profession for which I was educated, settled myself permanently at Lexley.

Well do I remember the melancholy face with which the good old rector, the very first evening we spent together, related to me in confidence that he had three years' dues in arrear to him from Lexley Hall; but that so wretched was said to be the state of Sir Laurence's embarrassments, that, for more than a year, his dread of arrest had kept him a close prisoner in his house in London.

"We have not seen him here these six years!" observed Dr Whittingham; "and I doubt whether he will ever again set foot in the county. Since an execution was put into the Hall, he has never crossed the threshold, and I suspect never will. Far better were he to dispose of the property at once! Dismembered as it is, what pleasure can it afford him? And, since he is unlikely to marry and have heirs, there is less call upon him to retain this remaining relic of family pride; yet I am assured—nay, have good reason to know, that he has refused a very liberal offer on the part of Mr Sparks. Malicious people do say, by the way, that it was by the advice of Sparks's favourite attorneys the execution was enforced, and that no means have been left unattempted to disgust him with the place. Yet he is firm, you see, and persists in disappointing his creditors, and depriving himself of the comforts of life, merely in order that he may die, as his fathers did before him—the lord of Lexley Hall!"

"I don't wonder!" said I, with the dawning sentiments of a

landed proprietor—"'Tis a splendid old house, even in its present state of degradation; and, by Jove! I honour his pertinacity."

Thus put upon the scent, I sometimes fancied I could detect wistful looks on the part of my prosperous neighbour of the Park, when, in the course of Dr Whittingham's somewhat lengthy sermons, he directed his eyes towards the carved old Gothic tribune, containing the family-pew of the Althams, in the parish church; and, whenever I happened to encounter him in the neighbourhood of the Hall, his face was so pointedly averted from the house, as if the mere object were an offence. I could not but wonder at his vexation; being satisfied in my own mind, that sooner or later the remaining heritage of the spendthrift must fall to his share.

Judge, therefore, of my surprise, when one fine morning, as I sauntered into the village, I found the whole population gathered in groups on the little market-place, and discovered from the incoherent exclamations of the crowd, that "the new proprietor of the Hall had just driven through in a chaise-and-four!"

Yes—"the new proprietor!" The place was sold! The good doctor's prediction was verified. Sir Laurence was never more to return to Lexley Hall!

The satisfaction of the villagers almost equalled their surprise on finding that General Stanley was their new landlord. It suited them much better that there should be two families settled on the property than one; and as it was pretty generally reported, that, in the event of Sparks becoming the purchaser, he intended

to demolish the old house, and reconsolidate the estate around his own more commodious mansion, they were right glad to find it rescued from such a sentence—General Stanley, who was the father of a family, would probably settle the hall on one of his daughters, after placing it in the state of repair so much needed.

When the chaise-and-four returned, therefore, a few hours afterwards, through the village, the General was loudly cheered by his subjects. His partiality for the place was so well known at Lexley, that already these people seemed to behold in him the guardian of a monument so long the object of their pride.

For my own part, nothing surprised me so much in the business as that Sparks should have allowed the purchase to slip through his fingers. It was worth thrice as much to *him* as to any body else. It was the keystone of his property. It was the one thing needful to render Lexley Park the most perfect seat in the county. But I was not slow in learning (for every thing transpires in a small country neighbourhood) that whatever *my* surprise on finding that the old Hall had changed its master, that of Sparks was far more overwhelming; that he was literally frantic on finding himself frustrated in expectations which formed the leading interest of his declining years. For the progress of time which had made *me* a man and a landed proprietor, had converted the stout active squire into an infirm old man; and it was his absorbing wish to die sole owner of the whole property to which the baronets of the Altham family were born.

He even indulged in expressions of irritation, which nearly

proved the means of commencing this new neighbourship by a duel; accusing General Stanley of having possessed himself by unfair means of Sir Laurence's confidence, and employed agents, underhand, to effect the purchase. In consequence of these groundless representations, it transpired in the country that the decayed baronet had actually volunteered the offer of the estate to the veteran proprietor of Stanley Manor; that he had *solicited* him to become the proprietor, and even accommodated him with peculiar facilities of payment, on condition of his inserting in the title-deeds an express undertaking, never to dispose of the old Hall, or any portion of the property, to Jonas Sparks of Lexley Park, or his heirs for ever. The solicitor by whom, under Sir Laurence's direction, the deeds had been prepared, saw fit to divulge this singular specification, rather than that a hostile encounter should run the risk of embruing in blood the hands of two grey haired men.

Excepting as regarded the disappointment of our wealthy neighbour, all was now established on the happiest footing at Lexley. The reparation instantly commenced by the General, gave employment throughout the winter to our workmen; and the evils arising from an absentee landlord began gradually to disappear. It was a great joy to me to perceive that the new proprietor of the Hall had the good taste to preserve the antique character of the place in the minutest portion of his alterations; and though the old gardens were no longer a wilderness, not a shrub was displaced—not a mutilated statue removed. The

furniture had been sold off at the time of the execution; and that which came down in cart-loads from town to replace it, was rigidly in accordance with the semi-Gothic architecture of the lofty chambers. Poor Sparks must have been doubly mortified; for not only did he find his old eyesore converted into an irremediable evil by the restoration of the Hall, but the supremacy hitherto maintained in the neighbourhood by the modern elegance of his house and establishment, was thrown into the shade by the rich and tasteful arrangements of the Hall.

From the contracted look of his forehead, and sudden alteration of his appearance, I have reason to think he was beginning to undergo all the moral martyrdom sustained for thirty years past by the unfortunate Sir Laurence Altham; and were I not by nature the most contented of men, it would have sufficiently reconciled me to the mediocrity of my fortunes, to see that these two great people of my neighbourhood—the nobly-descended baronet and rich *parvenu*—were miserable men; that, so long as I could remember, one or other of them had been given over to surliness and discontent.

Before the close of the year the grand old Hall had become one of the noblest seats in the county. There was talk about it in all the country round, and even the newspapers took notice of its renovation, and of General Stanley's removal thither from Stanley Manor. Many people, of the species who love to detect spots in the sun, were careful to point out the insufficiency of the estate, as at present constituted, to maintain so fine a house. But,

after all, what mattered this to General Stanley, who had a fine rent-roll elsewhere?

The first thing he did, on taking possession, was to give a grand ball to the neighbourhood; nor was it till the whole house was lighted up for this festive occasion, that people were fully aware of the grandeur of its proportions. He was good enough to send me an invitation on so especial an occasion. But already I had imbibed the distaste which has pursued me through life for what is called society; and I accordingly contented myself with surveying from a distance the fine effect produced by the light streaming from the multitude of windows, and exhibiting to the whole country round the gorgeous nature of the decorations within. To own the truth, I could scarcely forbear regretting, as I surveyed them, the gloomy dilapidation of the venerable mansion. This modernized antiquity was a very different thing from the massy grandeur of its neglected years; and I am afraid I loved the old house better with the weeds springing from its crevices, than with all this carving and gilding, this ebony, and iron, and light.

The people of Lexley imagined that nothing would induce the Sparks's family to be seen under General Stanley's roof. But we were mistaken. So much the contrary, that the squire of Lexley Park made a particular point of being the first and latest of the guests—not only because his reconciliation with his new neighbour was so recent, but from not choosing to authenticate, by his absence, the rumours of his grievous disappointment.

For all the good he was likely to derive from his visit, the poor man had better have stayed away; for that unlucky night laid foundations of evil for him and his, far greater than any he had incurred from the animosity of Sir Laurence. Nay, when in the sequel these results became matter of public commentation, superstitious people were not wanting to hint that the evil spirit, traditionally said to haunt one of the wings of the old manor, and to have manifested itself on more than one occasion to members of the Altham family, (and more especially to the late worthless proprietor of the Hall,) had acquired a fatal power over the two supplanters of the ruined family the moment they crossed the threshold.

General Stanley, after marrying late in life, had been some years a widower—a widower with two daughters, his co-heiresses. The elder of these young ladies was a hopeless invalid, slightly deformed, and so little attractive in person, or desirous to attract, that there was every prospect of the noble fortunes of the General centring in her sister. Yet this sister, this girl, had little need of such an accession to her charms; for she was one of those fortunate beings endowed not only with beauty and excellence, but with a power of pleasing not always united with even a combination of merit and loveliness.

Every body agreed that Mary Stanley was charming. Old and young, rich and poor, all loved her, all delighted in her. It is true, the good rector's maiden sisters privately hinted to me their horror of the recklessness with which—sometimes with her

sister, oftener without, but wholly unattended—she drove her little pony-chaise through the village, laughing like a madcap at pranks of a huge Newfoundland dog named Sergeant, the favourite of General Stanley, which, while escorting the young ladies, used to gambol into the cottages, overset furniture and children, and scamper out again amid a general uproar. For though Miss Mary was but sixteen, the starched spinsters decided that she was much too old for such folly; and that, if the General intended to present her at court, it was high time for her to lay aside the hoyden manners of childhood.

But, as every one argued against them, why should this joyous, bright, and beautiful creature lay aside what became her so strangely? Mary Stanley was not made for the formalities of what is called high-breeding. Her light, easy, sinuous figure, did not lend itself to the rigid deportment of a prude; and her gay laughing eyes, and dimpled mouth, were ill calculated to grace a dignified position. The long ringlets of her profuse auburn hair were always out of order—either streaming in the wind, or straying over her white shoulders—her long lashes and beautifully defined eyebrows of the same rich tint, alone preserving any thing like uniformity—a uniformity which, combined with her almost Grecian regularity of features, gave her, on the rare occasions when her countenance and figure were at rest, the air of some nymph or dryad of ancient sculpture. But to compare Mary Stanley to any thing of marble is strangely out of place; for her real beauty consisted in the ever-varying

play of her features, and a certain impetuosity of movement, that would have been a little characteristic of the romp, but that it was restrained by the spell of feminine sensibility. Heart was evidently the impulse of every look and every gesture.

For a man of my years, methinks I am writing like a lover. And so I was! From the first moment I saw that girl, at an humble and unaspiring distance, I could dream of nothing else. Every thing and every body seemed fascinated by Mary Stanley. When she walked out into the fields with the General, her two hands clasping, like those of a child, her father's arm, his favourite colts used to come neighing playfully towards them; and not the fiercest dog of his extensive kennel but, even when unmanageable by the keeper, would creep fawning to her feet.

It was strange enough, but still more fortunate, that all the adoration lavished upon this lovely creature by gentle and simple, Christian and brute, provoked no apparent jealousy on the part of her elder sister. Selina Stanley was afflicted with a cold, reserved, unhappy countenance, only too completely in unison with her disastrous position. But her heart was perhaps as genuine as her face was forbidding; for she loved the merry, laughing, handsome Mary, more as a mother her child, than as a sister nearly of her own years—that is, exultingly, but anxiously. Every one else foresaw nothing but prosperity, and joy, and love, in store for Mary. Selina prayed that it might prove so;—but she prayed with tears in her eyes, and trembling in her soul! For where are the destinies of persons thus exquisitely organized—thus full of love

and loveliness—thus readily swayed to joy or sorrow, by the trivial incidents of life—characterised by what the world calls happiness—such happiness, I mean, as is enjoyed by the serene and the prudent, the unexcitable, the unaspiring! Miss Stanley foresaw only too truly, that the best days likely to be enjoyed by her sister, were those she was spending under her father's roof—a general idol—an object of deference and delight to all around.

At the General's housewarming, though not previously introduced into society, Mary was the queen of the ball; and all present agreed, that one of the most pleasing circumstances of the evening was to watch the animated cordiality with which she flew from one to the other of those old neighbours of Stanley Manor, (whom she alone had managed to persuade that a dozen miles was no distance to prevent their accepting her father's invitation;) and not the most brilliant of her young friends received a more eager welcome, or more sustained attention throughout the evening, than the few homely elderly people, (such as my friends the Whittinghams,) who happened to share the hospitality of General Stanley. I daresay that even *I*, had I found courage to accept his invitation, should have received from the young beauty some gentle word, in addition to the kindly smiles with which she was sure to return my respectful obeisance whenever we met accidentally in the village.

Mary was dressed in white, with a few natural flowers in her hair, which, owing to the impetuosity of her movements, soon fell out, leaving only a stray leaf or two, that would have looked

ridiculous any where but among her rich, but dishevelled locks; and the pleasant anxieties of the evening imparted such a glow to her usually somewhat pale complexion, that her beauty is said to have been, that night, almost supernatural. She was more like the creature of a dream than one of those wooden puppets, who move mechanically through the world under the name of well brought-up young ladies.

It will easily be conceived how much this ball, so rare an event in our quiet neighbourhood, was discussed, not only the following day, but for days and weeks to come. Even at the rectory I heard of nothing else; while by my good old housekeeper, who had a son in service at General Stanley's, and a daughter waiting-maid to Miss Sparks, I was let in to secrets concerning it of which even the rectory knew nothing.

In the first place, though Mr Sparks had peremptorily signified from the first to his family, his desire that all should accompany him to Lexley Hall on this trying occasion, (and it was only natural he should wish to solace his wounded pride, by appearing before his noble neighbour surrounded by his handsome progeny,) two of his children had risen up in rebellion against the decree—and for the first time—for Sparks was happy in a dutiful and well-ordered family. But the youngest daughter, Kezia, a girl of high spirits and intelligence, who fancied she had been pointedly slighted by the Misses Stanley, when, in one of Mary's harum-scarum expeditions on her Shetland pony, she had passed without recognition the better-mounted young lady

of Lexley Park; and the eldest son, who so positively refused to accompany his father to the house of a man by whom Mr Sparks had inconsiderately represented himself as aggrieved, that, for once, the kind parent was forced to play the tyrant, and insist on his obedience.

It was, accordingly, with a very ill grace that these two, the prettiest of the daughters, and by far the handsomest of his three handsome sons, made their appearance at the *fête*. But no sooner were they welcomed by General Stanley and his daughters, than the brother and sister, who had mutually encouraged each other's disputes, hastened to recant their opinions.

"How could you, dearest father, describe this courteous, high-bred old gentleman, as insolent and overbearing?"—whispered Kezia.

"How could you possibly suppose that yonder lovely, gracious creature, intended to treat you with impertinence?"—was the rejoinder of her brother; and already the Stanleys had two enemies the less among their neighbours at Lexley Park.

On the other hand, the General had been forced to have recourse to severe schooling to bring his daughters to a sense of what was due to *his guests*, as regarded the family of a man who was known to have spoken disparagingly of them all. Moreover, if the truth must be owned, Mary was not altogether free from the prejudices of her caste; and, proud of her father's noble extraction, was apt to pout her pretty lip on mention of "the people at Lexley Park;" for the General, who had no

secrets from his girls, had foolishly permitted them to see certain letters addressed to him by the eccentric Sir Laurence Altham, justifying himself concerning the peculiar clause introduced into his deeds of conveyance of his Hall estate, on the grounds of the degraded origin of "the upstart" he was so malignantly intent on discomposing.

"They will spoil our ball, dear papa—I *know* these vulgar people will completely spoil our ball!" said she. "I think I hear them announced:—'Mr Jonas Sparks, Miss Basiliza and Miss Kezia Sparks!'—What names?"

"The parents of Mr Sparks were dissenters," observed the General, trying to look severe. "Dissenters are apt to hold to scriptural names. But *name* is not *nature*, Mary; and, to judge by appearances, this man's—this gentleman's—this Mr Sparks's daughters, have every qualification to be an ornament to society."

"With all my heart, papa, but I wish it were not ours!" cried the wayward girl. "On the present occasion, especially, I could spare such an accession to our circle; for I know that Mr Sparks has presumed to speak of–"

She was interrupted by a sterner reproof on the part of the General than he had ever before administered to his favourite daughter; and the consequence of this unusual severity was the distinguished reception bestowed, both by Selina and her sister, on the family from Lexley Park.

Next day, however, General Stanley found a totally different cause for rebuke in the conduct of his dear Mary.

"You talked to nobody last night, but those Sparks's!" said he. "Lord Dudley informed me he had asked you to dance three times in vain; and Lord Robert Stanley assured me *he* could scarcely get a civil answer from you!—Yet you found time, Mary, to dance twice in the course of the evening with that son of Sparks's!"

"That son of Sparks's, as you so despisingly call him, dearest papa, is a most charming partner; while Lord Dudley, and my cousin Robert, are little better than boors. Everard Sparks can talk and dance, as well as they ride across a country. Not but what he, too, passes for a tolerable sportsman; and do you know, papa, Mr Sparks is thinking seriously of setting up a pack of harriers at Lexley?"

"At Lexley Park!" insisted her father, who chose to enforce the distinction instituted by Sir Laurence Altham. "I fancy he will have to ask my permission first. My land lies somewhat inconveniently, in case I choose to oppose his intentions."

"But you won't oppose them!—No, no, dear papa, you sha'n't oppose them!"—cried Mary Stanley, throwing her arms coaxingly round her father's neck, and imprinting a kiss on his venerable forehead. "*Why* should we go on opposing and opposing, when it would be so much happier for all of us to live together as friends and neighbours?"

The General surveyed her in silence for some moments as she looked up lovingly into his face; then gravely, and in silence, unclasped her arms from his neck. For the first time, he had

gazed upon his favourite child without discerning beauty in her countenance, or finding favour for her supplications.

"*My* opinion of Mr Sparks and his family is not altered since yesterday," said he coldly, perceiving that she was about to renew her overtures for a pacification. "Your father's prejudices, Mary, are seldom so slightly grounded, that the adulation of a few gross compliments, such as were paid you last night by Mr Everard Sparks, may suffice for their obliteration. For the future, remember the less I hear of Lexley Park the better. In a few weeks we shall be in London, where our sphere is sufficiently removed, I am happy to say, from that of Mr Jonas Sparks, to secure me against the annoyance of familiarity with him or his."

The partiality of his darling Mary for the handsomest and most agreeable young man who had ever sought to make himself agreeable to her, had sufficed to turn the arguments of General Stanley as decidedly *against* his *parvenu* neighbours, as, two days before, his eloquence had been exercised in their defence.

And now commenced between the young people and their parents, one of those covert warfares certain to arise from similar interdictions. Mr Sparks—satisfied that he should have further insults to endure on the part of General Stanley, in the event of his son pretending to the hand of the proud old man's daughter—sought a serious explanation with Everard, on finding that he neglected no opportunity of meeting Mary Stanley in her drives, and walks, and errands of village benevolence; and by the remonstrances of one father, and peremptoriness of the other,

the young couple were soon tempted to seek comforts in mutual confidences. Residing almost within view of each other, there was no great difficulty in finding occasion for an interview. They met, moreover, naturally, and without effort, in all the country houses in the neighbourhood; and so frequently, that I often wondered they should consider it worth while to hazard the General's displeasure by partaking a few moments' conversation, every now and then, among the old thorns by the water-side, just where the bend of the river secured them from observation; or in the green lane leading from Lexley Park to my farm, while Miss Stanley took charge of the pony-chaise during the hasty explanations of the imprudent couple. Having little to occupy my leisure during the intervals of my agricultural pursuits, I was constantly running against them, with my gun on my shoulder or my fishing-rod in my hand. I almost feared young Sparks might imagine that I was employed by the General as a spy upon their movements, so fierce a glance did he direct towards me one day when I was unlucky enough to vault over a hedge within a few yards of the spot where they were standing together—Miss Mary sobbing like a child. But, God knows! he was mistaken if he thought I was taking unfair heed of their proceedings, or likely to gossip indiscreetly concerning what fell accidentally under my notice.

Not that a single soul in the neighbourhood approved General Stanley's opposition to the attachment. On the contrary, from the moment of the liking between the young people becoming

apparent, the whole country decided that there could not be a more propitious mode of reuniting the dismembered Lexley estates; for though the General was expressly debarred from selling Lexley Hall to Sparks or his heirs, he could not be prevented bequeathing it to his daughters—the heirs of Jonas Sparks being the children of her body. And thus all objections would have been remedied.

But such was not the proud old man's view of the case. He had set his heart on perpetuating his own name in his family. He had set his heart on the union of his dear Mary with her cousin Lord Robert Stanley; and Everard Sparks might have been twice the handsome, manly young fellow he was—twice the gentleman, and twice the scholar—it would have pleaded little in his favour against the predetermined projects of the positive General. There was certainly some excuse for his ambition on Miss Mary's account. Beauty, merit, fortune, connexion, every advantage was hers calculated to do honour to a noble alliance; and as her father often exclaimed, with a bitter sneer, in answer to the mild pleadings of Selina—"Such a girl as that—a girl born to be a duchess—to sacrifice herself to the son of a Congleton manufacturer!"

Two years did the struggle continue—during the greater part of which I was a constant eyewitness of the sorrows which so sobered the impetuous deportment of the light-hearted Mary Stanley. Her father took her to London, with the project of separation he had haughtily announced; but only to find, to his

amazement, that Eton and Oxford had placed the son of Mr Sparks of Lexley Park, a member of Parliament, on as good a footing as himself in nearly all the circles he frequented. Even when, in the desperation of his fears, he removed his family to the Continent, the young lover (as became the lover of so endearing and attractive a creature) followed her, at a distance, from place to place. At length, one angry day, the General provoked him to a duel. But Everard would not lift his hand against the father of his beloved Mary. An insult from General Stanley was not as an offence from any other man. The only revenge taken by the high-spirited young man, was to urge the ungenerous conduct of the father as an argument with the daughter to put an end, by an elopement, to a state of things too painful to be borne. After much hesitation, it seems, she most unhappily complied. They were married—at Naples I think, or Turin, or some other city of Italy, where we have a diplomatic resident; and after their marriage—poor, foolish young people!—they went touring it about gaily in the Archipelago and Levant, waiting a favourable moment to propose a reconciliation with their respective fathers —as if the wrath and malediction of parents was so mere a trifle to deal with.

The first step taken by General Stanley, on learning the ungrateful rebellion of his favourite child, was to return to England. He seemed to want to be at home again, the better to enjoy and cultivate his abhorrence of every thing bearing the despised name of Sparks; for now began the genuine hatred

between the families. Nothing would satisfy the obstinate old soldier, but that the elder Sparks had, from the first, secretly encouraged the views of his son upon the heiress of Lexley Hall; while Mr Sparks naturally resented with enraged spirit the overbearing tone assumed by his aristocratic neighbour towards those so nearly his equals. Every day produced some new grounds for offence; and never had Sir Laurence Altham, in the extremity of his poverty, regarded the thriving mansion in the valley with half the loathing which the view of Lexley Park produced in the mind of General Stanley. He was even at the trouble of trenching a plantation on the brow of the hill, with the intention of shutting out the detested object. But trees do not grow so hastily as antipathies; and the General had to endure the certainty, that, for the remainder of *his* life at least, that beautiful domain must be unrolled, map-like, at his feet. Nor is it to be supposed that the battlements of the old hall found greater favour in the sight of the *parvenu* squire, than when in Sir Laurence's time the very sight of them was wormwood to his soul.

Unhappily, while the Congleton manufacturer contented himself with angry words, the gentleman of thirty descents betook himself to action. General Stanley swore to be mightily revenged—and he was so.

On the very day following his return to England, before he even visited his desolate country-house, he sent for Lord Robert Stanley, and made him the confidant of his indignation—avowed his former good intentions in his favour—betrayed all Mary's

—all *Mr Everard Sparks's* disparaging opposition; and ended by enquiring whether, since whichever of his daughters became Lady Robert Stanley would become sole heiress to his property, his lordship could make up his mind to accept Selina as a wife? Proud as he was, the General almost condescended to plead the cause of his deformed daughter: enlarging upon her excellences of character, and, still more, upon her aversion to society, which would secure the self-love of her husband against any public remarks on her want of personal attractions.

Alas! all these arguments were thoroughly thrown away. Lord Robert was, as his cousin Mary had truly described him, little better than a boor. But he was also a spendthrift and a libertine; and had Miss Stanley been as deformed in mind as she was in person, he would have joyfully taken to wife the heiress of ten thousand a-year, and two of the finest seats in the county of Chester.

To herself, meanwhile, no hint of these family negotiations was vouchsafed; and Selina Stanley had every reason to suppose —when her cousin became on a sudden an assiduous visitor at the house, and very shortly a declared lover—that their intimacy from childhood had accustomed his eye to her want of personal charms—she had become endeared to him by her mild and submissive temper. So little was she aware of her father's testamentary dispositions in her favour, that the interested nature of Lord Robert's views did not occur to her mind; and, little accustomed to protestations of attachment, Selina's heart was

not *very* difficult to soften towards the only man who had ever pretended to love her, and whose apparent attachment promised some consolation for the loss of her sister's society, as well as the chance of reunion with one whom her father had sworn should never, under any possible circumstances, again cross his threshold.

Six months after General Stanley's pride had been wounded to the quick by the newspaper account of a marriage between his favourite child and "a man of the name of Sparks," balm was poured into the wound by another and more pompous paragraph, announcing the union, by special license, of the Right Hon. Lord Robert Stanley and the eldest daughter and heiress of Lieut.-Gen. Stanley, of Stanley Manor, only son of the late Lord Henry Stanley, followed by the usual list of noble relatives gracing the ceremony with their presence, and a flourishing account of the departure of the happy couple, in a travelling carriage and four, for their seat in Cheshire.

This announcement, by the way, probably served to convey the intelligence to Mr and Mrs Everard Sparks; for the General having carefully intercepted every letter addressed by Mary to her sister, Lady Robert had not the slightest idea in what direction to communicate with one who possessed an undiminished share in her affections.

On General Stanley's arrival in Cheshire, at the close of the honeymoon, the most casual observer might have noticed the alteration which had taken place in his appearance. Instead of

the sadness I had expected to find in his countenance after so severe a stroke as the disobedience of his darling girl, I never saw him so exulting. Yet his smiles were not smiles of good-humour. There was bitterness at the bottom of every word he uttered; and a terrible sound of menace rung in his unnatural laughter. Consciousness never seemed a moment absent from his mind, that he had defeated the calculations of the designing family; that he had distanced them; that he was triumphing over them. Alas! none at present entertained the smallest suspicion to what extent!

Preparatory to the settlements made by the General on Lord and Lady Robert Stanley, it had been found necessary to place in the hands of his lordship's solicitors the deeds of the Lexley Hall estate; when, lo! to the consternation of all parties, it appeared that the General's title was an unsound one; that by the general terms of this ancient property, rights of heirship could only be evaded by the payment of a certain fine, after intimation of sale in a certain form to the nearest-of-kin of the heir in possession, which form had been overlooked or wantonly neglected by Sir Laurence Altham!

The discovery was indeed embarrassing. Fortunately, however, the sum of ten thousand pounds only had been paid by the General to satisfy the immediate funds of the unthrifty baronet; the remainder of the purchase-money having been left in the form of mortgage on the property. There was consequently the less difficulty, though considerable expense, in cancelling the existing deeds, going through the necessary forms, and, after

paying the forfeiture to the heir, (to whom the very existence of his claims was unknown,) renewing the contract with Sir Laurence; to whom, so considerable a sum being still owing, it was as essential as to General Stanley that the covenant should be completed without delay. But all this occurred at so critical a moment, that the General had ample cause to be thankful for the promptitude with which he decided Selina's marriage; for only four days after the signature of the new deeds, Sir Laurence concluded his ill-spent life—his death being, it was thought, accelerated by the excitement consequent on this strange discovery, and the investigations on the part of the heir to which it was giving rise.

For the clause in the original grant of the Lexley estate (which dated from the Reformation) affected the property purchased by Jonas Sparks as fully as that which had been assigned to the General; and the baronet being now deceased, there was no possibility of co-operation in rectifying the fatal error. It was more than probable, therefore, that Lexley Park, with all its improvements, was now the property of John Julius Altham, Esq.!—the only dilemma still to be decided by the law, being the extent to which, his kinsman having died insolvent and intestate, he was liable to the suit of Jonas Sparks for the return of the purchase money, amounting to L.145,000.

Already the fatal intelligence had been communicated by the attorneys of John Julius Altham to those of the astonished man, who, though still convinced of the goodness of his cause,

(which, on the strength of certain various statutes affecting such a case, he was advised to contest to the utmost,) foresaw a long, vexatious, and expensive lawsuit, that would certainly last his life, and prevent the possibility of one moment's enjoyment of the estate, from which he had received the usual notice of ejection. Fortunately for him, the present Mr Altham was not only a gentleman, and disposed to exercise his rights in the most decorous manner; but, of course, unbiassed by the personal prejudices so strongly felt by Sir Laurence, and so unfairly communicated by him to the General. Still, the question was proceeding at the snail's pace rate of Chancery suits at the commencement of the present century, and the unfortunate Congleton manufacturer had every reason to curse the day when he had become enamoured of the grassy glades and rich woodlands of Lexley; seeing that, at the close of an honourable and well-spent life, he was uncertain whether the sons and daughters to whom he had laboured to bequeath a handsome independence, might not be reduced to utter destitution.

Such was the intelligence that saluted the ill-starred Mary and her husband on their return to England! Instead of the brilliant prospects in which she had been nurtured—disinheritance met her on the one side, and ruin on the other!

Her vindictive father had even made it a condition of his bounties to Lord and Lady Robert, that all intercourse should cease between them and their sister; a condition which the former, in revenge for the early slights of his fairer cousin, took

care should be punctually obeyed by his wife.

Till the event of the trial, Mr Sparks retained, of course, possession of the Park; but so bitter was the mortification of the family, on discovering in the village precisely the same ungrateful feeling which had so embittered the soul of Sir Laurence, that they preferred remaining in London—where no one has leisure to dwell upon the mischances of his neighbours, and where sympathy is as little expected as conceded. But when Mary arrived—*poor* Mary! who had now the prospect of becoming a mother—and who, though affectionately beloved by her husband's family, saw they regarded her as the innocent origin of their present reverses—she soon persuaded her husband to accompany her to her old haunts.

"Do not imagine, dearest," said she, "that I have any project of debasing you and myself, by intruding into my father's presence. Had we been still prosperous, Everard, I would have gone to him—knelt to him—prayed to him—wept to him—*so* earnestly, that his forgiveness could not have been long withheld from the child he loved so dearly. I would have described to him all you are to me—all your indulgences—all your devotion—and *you*, too, my own husband, would have been forgiven. But as it is, believe me, I have too proud a sense of what is due to ourselves, to combat the unnatural hostility in which my sister and her husband appear to take their share. O Everard! to think of Selina becoming the wife of that coarse and heartless man, of whom, in former times, she thought even more contemptuously than I; and who, with his

dissolute habits, can only have made my poor afflicted sister his wife from the most mercenary motives! I dread to think of what may be her fate hereafter, when, having obtained at my father's death all the advantages to which he looks forward, he will show himself in his true colours."

Thus, even with such terrible prospects awaiting herself, the good, generous Mary trembled only to contemplate those of her regardless sister; and it was chiefly for the delight of revisiting the spots where they had played together in childhood—the fondly-remembered environs of Stanley Manor—that she persuaded her husband to take up his abode in the deserted mansion at the Park, where, from prudential motives, Mr Sparks had broken up his establishment, and sold off his horses.

Attended by a single servant, in addition to the old porter and his wife who were in charge of the house, Mary trusted that their arrival at Lexley would be unnoticed in the neighbourhood. Confining herself strictly within the boundaries of the Park, which neither her father nor the bride and bridegroom were likely to enter, she conceived that she might enjoy, on her husband's arm, those solitary rambles of which every day circumscribed the extent; without affording reason to the General to suppose, when, discerning every morning from his lofty terraces the mansion of his falling enemy, that, in place of the man he loathed, it contained his discarded child.

The dispirited young woman, on the other hand, delighted in contemplating from the windows of her dressing-room the

towers beneath, whose shelter she had abided in such perfect happiness with her doating father and apparently attached sister. They loved her no longer, it is true. Perhaps it was her fault—(she would not allow herself to conceive it could be a fault of *theirs*)—but at all events she loved *them* dearly as ever; and it was comforting to her poor heart to catch a glimpse of their habitation, and know herself within reach, should sickness or evil betide.

"If I should not survive my approaching time," thought Mary, often surveying for hours, through her tears, the heights of Lexley Hall, and fancying she could discern human figures moving from window to window, or from terrace to terrace; "if I should be fated never to behold this child, already loved—this child which is to be so dear a blessing to us both—in my last hours my father would not surely refuse to give me his blessing; nor would Selina persist in her present cruel alienation. It is, indeed, a comfort to be here."

Her husband thought otherwise. To him nothing was more trying than this compulsory sojourn at Lexley; not that he required other society than that of his engaging and attached wife. At any other moment it would have been delightful to him to enjoy the country pleasures around them, with no officious intrusive world to interpose between their affection. But in his present uncertainty as to his future prospects, to be mocked by this empty show of proprietorship, and have constantly before his eyes the residence of the man who had heaped such contumely

on his head, and inflicted such pain on the gentlest and sweetest of human hearts, was a state of moral torment.

In the course of my fishing excursions—(for, thanks to Mr Sparks's neighbourly liberality, I had a card of general access to his parks)—I frequently met the young couple; and having no clue to their secret sentiments, noticed, with deep regret, the sadness of Mary's countenance and sinister looks of her husband. I feared—I greatly feared—that they were not happy together. The General's daughter repined, perhaps, after her former fortunes. The young husband sighed, doubtless, over the liberty he had renounced.

It was spring time, and Lord Robert having satisfied his cravings after the pleasures of London, by occasional bachelor visits on pretence of business, the family were to remain at the Hall till after the Easter holidays, so that Mary had every expectation of the accomplishment of her hopes previous to their departure. Perhaps, in the bottom of her heart, she flattered herself that, on hearing of her safety, her obdurate relations might be moved, by a sudden burst of pity and kindliness, to make overtures of reconciliation—at all events to dispatch words of courteous enquiry; for she was ever dwelling on her good fortune that her father should, on this particular year, have so retarded the usual period of his departure. Yet when the report of these exulting exclamations on her part reached my ear, I was ungenerous enough to attribute them to a very different origin, fancying that the poor submissive creature was thankful for being

within reach of protection from conjugal misusage.

Meanwhile, she was so far justified in one portion of her premises, that no tidings of her residence at Lexley Park had as yet reached the ear of her father. The fact was, that not a soul had courage to do so much as mention, in his presence, the name of his once idolized child; and Lord Robert, having been apprized of the circumstance, instantly exacted a promise from his wife, that nothing should induce her to hazard her father's displeasure by communication with her sister, or by acquainting the General of the arrival of the offending pair. The consequence was, that in the dread of encountering her sister, (whom she felt ashamed to meet as the wife of the man they had so often decried together,) Lady Robert rarely quitted the house; and these two sisters, so long the affectionate inmates of the same chamber—the sisters who had wept together over their mother's deathbed—abided within sight of each other's windows, yet estranged as with the estrangement of strangers.

And then, we pretend to talk with horror of the family feuds of southern nations; and, priding ourselves on our calm and passionless nature, feel convinced that all the domestic virtues extant on earth, have taken refuge in the British empire!

Every day, meanwhile, I noticed that the handsome countenance of Everard Sparks grew gloomier and gloomier; and how was I to know that every day he received letters from his father, announcing the unfavourable aspect of their suit; and that (owing, as was supposed, to the suggestions of General Stanley's

solicitors) even the conduct of the adverse party was becoming offensive. The elder Sparks wrote like a man overwhelmed with mortification, and stung by a sense of undeserved injury; and his appeals to the sympathy and support of his son, were such as to place the spirited young man in a most painful predicament as regarded the family of his wife.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.