

THE CAXTONS - PART 17

EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON*

PART XVII.

CHAPTER I.

The stage-scene has dropped. Settle yourselves, my good audience; chat each with his neighbor. Dear madam in the boxes, take up your opera-glass and look about you. Treat Tom and pretty Sal to some of those fine oranges, O thou happy-looking mother in the two-shilling gallery! Yes, brave 'prentice-boys in the tier above, the cat-call by all means! And you, "most potent, grave, and reverend signiors" in the front row of the pit, practised critics and steady old playgoers, who shake your heads at new actors and playwrights, and, true to the creed of your youth (for the which all honor to you!), firmly believe that we are shorter by the head than those giants our grandfathers,—laugh or scold as you will, while the drop-scene still shuts out the stage. It is just that you should all amuse yourselves in your own way, O spectators! for the interval is long. All the actors have to change their dresses; all the scene-shifters are at work sliding the "sides" of a new world into their grooves; and in high disdain of all unity of time, as of place, you will see in the play-bills that there is a great demand on your belief. You are called upon to suppose that we are older by five years than when you last saw us "fret our hour upon the stage." Five years! the author tells us especially to humor the belief by letting the drop-scene linger longer than usual between the lamps and the stage.

Play up, O ye fiddles and kettle-drums! the time is elapsed. Stop that cat-call, young gentleman; heads down in the pit there! Now the flourish is over, the scene draws up: look before.

A bright, clear, transparent atmosphere,—bright as that of the East, but vigorous and bracing as the air of the North; a broad and fair river, rolling through wide grassy plains; yonder, far in the distance, stretch away vast forests of evergreen, and gentle slopes break the line of the cloudless horizon. See the pastures, Arcadian with sheep in

*PDF created by pdfbooks.co.za

hundreds and thousands,—Thyrsis and Menalcas would have had hard labor to count them, and small time, I fear, for singing songs about Daphne. But, alas! Daphnes are rare; no nymphs with garlands and crooks trip over those pastures.

Turn your eyes to the right, nearer the river; just parted by a low fence from the thirty acres or so that are farmed for amusement or convenience, not for profit,—that comes from the sheep,—you catch a glimpse of a garden. Look not so scornfully at the primitive horticulture: such gardens are rare in the Bush. I doubt if the stately King of the Peak ever more rejoiced in the famous conservatory, through which you may drive in your carriage, than do the sons of the Bush in the herbs and blossoms which taste and breathe of the old fatherland. Go on, and behold the palace of the patriarchs,—it is of wood, I grant you; but the house we build with our own hands is always a palace. Did you ever build one when you were a boy? And the lords of that palace are lords of the land almost as far as you can see, and of those numberless flocks; and, better still, of a health which an antediluvian might have envied, and of nerves so seasoned with horse-breaking, cattle-driving, fighting with wild blacks,—chases from them and after them, for life and for death,—that if any passion vex the breast of those kings of the Bushland, fear at least is erased from the list.

See here and there through the landscape rude huts like the masters': wild spirits and fierce dwell within. But they are tamed into order by plenty and hope; by the hand open but firm, by the eye keen but just.

Now out from those woods, over those green rolling plains, harum-scarum, helter-skelter, long hair flying wild, and all bearded as a Turk or a pard, comes a rider you recognize. The rider dismounts, and another old acquaintance turns from a shepherd, with whom he has been conversing on matters that never plagued Thyrsis and Menalcas,—whose sheep seem to have been innocent of foot-rot and scab,—and accosts the horseman.

Pisistratus.—"My dear Guy, where on earth have you been?"

Guy (producing a book from his pocket, with great triumph).—"There! Dr. Johnson's 'Lives of the Poets.' I could not get the squatter to let me have 'Kenilworth,' though I offered him three sheep for it. Dull old fellow, that Dr. Johnson, I suspect,—so much the better, the book will last all the longer. And here's a Sydney paper, too, only two months old!" (Guy takes a short pipe, or dudeen, from his hat, in the band of which it had been stuck, fills and lights it.)

Pisistratus.—"You must have ridden thirty miles at the least. To think of your turning book-hunter, Guy!"

Guy Bolding (philosophically).—"Ay, one don't know the worth of a thing till one has lost it. No sneers at me, old fellow; you, too, declared that you were bothered out of your life by those books till you found

how long the evenings were without them. Then, the first new book we got—an old volume of the 'Spectator!'—such fun!"

Pisistratus.—"Very true. The brown cow has calved in your absence. Do you know, Guy, I think we shall have no scab in the fold this year. If so, there will be a rare sum to lay by! Things look up with us now, Guy."

Guy Bolding.—"Yes. Very different from the first two years. You drew a long face then. How wise you were, to insist on our learning experience at another man's station before we hazarded our own capital! But, by Jove! those sheep at first were enough to plague a man out his wits. What with the wild dogs, just as the sheep had been washed and ready to shear; then that cursed scabby sheep of Joe Timmes's, that we caught rubbing his sides so complacently against our unsuspecting poor ewes. I wonder we did not run away. But Patientia fit,—what is that line in Horace? Never mind now. 'It is a long lane that has no turning' does just as well as anything in Horace, and Virgil to boot. I say, has not Vivian been here?"

Pisistratus.—"No; but he will be sure to come to-day."

Guy Bolding.—"He has much the best berth of it. Horse-breeding and cattle-feeding: galloping after those wild devils; lost in a forest of horns; beasts lowing, scampering, goring, tearing off like mad buffaloes; horses galloping up hill, down hill, over rocks, stones, and timber; whips cracking, men shouting, your neck all but broken; a great bull making at you full rush. Such fun! Sheep are dull things to look at after a bull-hunt and a cattle-feast."

Pisistratus.—"Every man to his taste in the Bush. One may make one's money more easily and safely, with more adventure and sport, in the bucolic department; but one makes larger profit and quicker fortune, with good luck and good care, in the pastoral,—and our object, I take it, is to get back to England as soon as we can."

Guy Bolding.—"Humph! I should be content to live and die in the Bush,—nothing like it, if women were not so scarce. To think of the redundant spinster population at home, and not a spinster here to be seen within thirty miles,—save Bet Goggins, indeed, and she has only one eye! But to return to Vivian: why should it be our object, more than his, to get back to England as soon as we can?"

Pisistratus.—"Not more, certainly. But you saw that an excitement more stirring than that we find in the sheep had become necessary to him. You know he was growing dull and dejected; the cattle station was to be sold a bargain. And then the Durham bulls and the Yorkshire horses which Mr. Trevanion sent you and me out as presents, were so tempting, I thought we might fairly add one speculation to another; and since one of us must superintend the bucolics, and two of us were required for the

pastorals, I think Vivian was the best of us three to entrust with the first,—and certainly it has succeeded as yet.”

Guy.—“Why, yes, Vivian is quite in his element,—always in action, and always in command. Let him be first in everything, and there is not a finer fellow, nor a better tempered,—present company excepted. Hark! the dogs, the crack of the whip; there he is. And now, I suppose, we may go to dinner.”

(Enter Vivian.) His frame has grown more athletic; his eye, more steadfast and less restless, looks you full in the face. His smile is more open, but there is a melancholy in his expression almost approaching to gloom. His dress is the same as that of Pisistratus and Guy,—white vest and trousers; loose neckcloth, rather gay in color; broad cabbage-leaf hat; his mustache and beard are trimmed with more care than ours. He has a large whip in his hand, and a gun slung across his shoulders. Greetings are exchanged; mutual inquiries as to cattle and sheep, and the last horses despatched to the Indian market. Guy shows the “Lives of the Poets,” Vivian asks if it is possible to get the Life of Clive, or Napoleon, or a copy of Plutarch. Guy shakes his head; says if a Robinson Crusoe will do as well, he has seen one in a very tattered state, but in too great request to be had a bargain.

The party turn into the hut. Miserable animals are bachelors in all countries, but most miserable in Bushland. A man does not know what a helpmate of the soft sex is in the Old World, where women seem a matter of course. But in the Bush a wife is literally bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh,—your better half, your ministering angel, your Eve of the Eden; in short, all that poets have sung, or young orators say at public dinners when called upon to give the toast of “The Ladies.” Alas! we are three bachelors, but we are better off than bachelors often are in the Bush; for the wife of the shepherd I took from Cumberland does me and Bolding the honor to live in our but and make things tidy and comfortable. She has had a couple of children since we have been in the Bush; a wing has been added to the but for that increase of family. The children, I dare say, one might have thought a sad nuisance in England; but I declare that, surrounded as one is by great bearded men from sunrise to sunset, there is something humanizing, musical, and Christian-like in the very squall of the baby. There it goes, bless it! As for my other companions from Cumberland, Miles Square, the most aspiring of all, has long left me, and is superintendent to a great sheep-owner some two hundred miles off. The Will-o’-the-Wisp is consigned to the cattle station, where he is Vivian’s head man, finding time now and then to indulge his old poaching propensities at the expense of parrots, black cockatoos, pigeons, and kangaroos. The shepherd remains with us, and does not seem, honest fellow, to care to better himself; he has a feeling of clanship which keeps down the ambition common in Australia. And his wife—such a treasure! I assure you, the sight of her smooth, smiling woman’s face when we return home at nightfall, and the very flow of her gown as she turns the “dampers”

(1) in the ashes and fills the teapot, have in them something holy and angelical. How lucky our Cumberland swain is not jealous! Not that there is any cause, enviable dog though he be; but where Desdemonas are so scarce, if you could but guess how green-eyed their Othellos generally are! Excellent husbands, it is true,—none better; but you had better think twice before you attempt to play the Cassio in Bushland! There, however, she is, dear creature!—rattling among knives and forks, smoothing the table-cloth, setting on the salt beef, and that rare luxury of pickles (the last pot in our store), and the produce of our garden and poultry-yard, which few Bushmen can boast of, and the dampers, and a pot of tea to each banqueter,—no wine, beer, nor spirits; those are only for shearing-time. We have just said grace (a fashion retained from the holy mother-country), when, bless my soul! what a clatter without, what a tramping of feet, what a barking of dogs! Some guests have arrived. They are always welcome in Bushland! Perhaps a cattle-buyer in search of Vivian; perhaps that cursed squatter whose sheep are always migrating to ours. Never mind,—a hearty welcome to all, friend or foe. The door opens; one, two, three strangers. More plates and knives; draw your stools: just in time. First eat, then—what news?

Just as the strangers sit down a voice is heard at the door,—

”You will take particular care of this horse, young man walk him about a little; wash his back with salt and water. Just unbuckle the saddle-bags; give them to me. Oh! safe enough, I dare say, but papers of consequence. The prosperity of the colony depends on these papers. What would become of you all if any accident happened to them, I shudder to think.”

And here, attired in a twill shooting-jacket budding with gilt buttons impressed with a well-remembered device; a cabbage-leaf hat shading a face rarely seen in the Bush; a face smooth as razor could make it; neat, trim, respectable-looking as ever; his arm full of saddle-bags, and his nostrils gently distended, inhaling the steam of the banquet,—walks in—Uncle Jack.

Pisistratus (leaping up).—”Is it possible? You in Australia!—you in the Bush!”

Uncle Jack, not recognizing Pisistratus in the tall bearded man who is making a plunge at him, recedes in alarm, exclaiming: ”Who are you? Never saw you before, sir! I suppose you’ll say next that I owe you something!”

Pisistratus.—”Uncle Jack!”

Uncle Jack. (dropping his saddle-bags).—”Nephew! Heaven be praised! Come to my arms!”

They embrace; mutual introductions to the company,—Mr. Vivian, Mr. Bolding, on the one side; Major MacBlarney, Mr. Bullion, Mr. Emanuel Speck, on the other. Major MacBlarney is a fine, portly man, with a slight Dublin brogue, who squeezes your hand as he would a sponge. Mr. Bullion, reserved and haughty, wears green spectacles, and gives you a forefinger. Mr. Emanuel Speck—unusually smart for the Bush, with a blue-satin stock and one of those blouses common in Germany, with elaborate hems and pockets enough for Briareus to have put all hands into at once; is, thin, civil, and stoops—bows, smiles, and sits down to dinner again, with the air of a man accustomed to attend to the main chance.

Uncle Jack (his mouth full of beef).—”Famous beef!—breed it yourself, eh? Slow work that cattle-feeding! [Empties the rest of the pickle-jar into his plate.] Must learn to go ahead in the New World,—railway times these! We can put him up to a thing or to, eh, Bullion? [Whispering me] Great capitalist that Bullion! Look At Him!”

Mr. Bullion (gravely).—”A thing or two! If he has capital,—you have said it, Mr. Tibbets.” (Looks round for the pickles; the green spectacles remain fixed upon Uncle Jack’s plate.)

Uncle Jack.—”All that this colony wants is a few men like us, with capital and spirit. Instead of paying paupers to emigrate, they should pay rich men to come, eh, Speck?”

While Uncle Jack turns to Mr. Speck, Mr. Bullion fixes his fork in a pickled onion in Jack’s plate and transfers it to his own, observing, not as incidentally to the onion, but to truth in general: ”A man, gentlemen, in this country, has only to keep his eyes on the look-out and seize on the first advantage! Resources are incalculable!”

Uncle Jack, returning to the plate, and missing the onion, forestalls Mr. Speck in seizing the last potato; observing also, and in the same philosophical and generalizing spirit as Mr. Bullion: ”The great thing in this country is to be always beforehand. Discovery and invention, promptitude and decision,—that’s your go! ’Pon my life, one picks up sad vulgar sayings among the natives here! ’That’s your go!’—shocking! What would your poor father say? How is he,—good Austin? Well? That’s right; and my dear sister? Ah, that damnable Peck! Still harping on the ’Anti-Capitalist,’ eh? But I’ll make it up to you all now. Gentlemen, charge your glasses,—a bumper-toast.”

Mr. Speck (in an affected tone).—”I respond to the sentiment in a flowing cup. Glasses are not forthcoming.”

Uncle Jack.—”A bumper-toast to the health of the future millionaire whom I present to you in my nephew and sole heir,—Pisistratus Caxton, Esq. Yes, gentlemen, I here publicly announce to you that this gentleman will be the inheritor of all my wealth,—freehold, leasehold,

agricultural, and mineral; and when I am in the cold grave [takes out his pocket-handkerchief], and nothing remains of poor John Tibbets, look upon that gentleman and say, 'John Tibbets lives again!'"

Mr. Speck (chantingly),—

”Let the bumper-toast go round.”

Guy Bolding.—”Hip, hip, hurrah!—three times three! What fun!”

Order is restored; dinner-things are cleared; each gentleman lights his pipe.

Vivian.—”What news from England?”

Mr. Bullion.—”As to the Funds, sir?”

Mr. Speck.—”I suppose you mean rather as to the railways. Great fortunes will be made there, sir; but still I think that our speculations here will—”

Vivian.—”I beg pardon for interrupting you, sir, but I thought, in the last papers, that there seemed something hostile in the temper of the French. No chance of a war?”

Major MacBlarney.—”Is it the wars you'd be after, young gentleman? If me interest at the Horse Guards can avail you, bedad! you'd make a proud man of Major MacBlarney.”

Mr. Bullion (authoritatively).—”No, sir, we won't have a war; the capitalists of Europe and Australia won't have it. The Rothschilds and a few others that shall be nameless have only got to do this, sir [Mr. Bullion buttons up his pockets],—and we'll do it, too; and then what becomes of your war, Sir?” (Mr. Bullion snaps his pipe in the vehemence with which he brings his hand on the table, turns round the green spectacles, and takes up Mr. Speck's pipe, which that gentleman had laid aside in an unguarded moment.)

Vivian.—”But the campaign in India?”

Major MacBlarney.—”Oh! and if it's the Ingees you'd—”

Mr. Bullion (refilling Speck's pipe from Guy Bolding's exclusive tobacco-pouch, and interrupting the Major).—”India,—that's another matter; I don't object to that. War there,—rather good for the money market than otherwise.”

Vivian.—”What news there, then?”

Mr. Bullion.—"Don't know; have n't got India stock."

Mr. Speck.—"Nor I either. The day for India is over, this is our India now." (Misses his tobacco-pipe; sees it in Bullion's mouth, and stares aghast. N. B. The pipe is not a clay dudeen, but a small meerschaum.—irreplaceable in Bushland.)

Pisistratus.—"Well, uncle, but I am at a loss to understand what new scheme you have in hand. Something benevolent, I am sure; something for your fellow-creatures,—for philanthropy and mankind?"

Mr. Bullion (starting).—"Why, young man, are you as green as all that?"

Pisistratus.—"I, sir? No; Heaven forbid! But my—" (Uncle Jack holds up his forefinger imploringly, and spills his tea over the pantaloons of his nephew!)

Pisistratus, wroth at the effect of the tea, and therefore obdurate to the sign of the forefinger, continues rapidly, "But my uncle is! Some Grand National-Imperial-Colonial-Anti-Monopoly—"

Uncle Jack.—"Pooh! pooh! What a droll boy it is!"

Mr. Bullion (solemnly).—"With these notions, which not even in jest should be fathered on my respectable and intelligent friend here [Uncle Jack bows], I am afraid you will never get on in the world, Mr. Caxton. I don't think our speculations will suit you! It is growing late, gentlemen; we must push on."

Uncle Jack (jumping up).—"And I have so much to say to the dear boy. Excuse us,—you know the feelings of an uncle." (Takes my arm and leads me out of the hut.)

Uncle Jack (as soon as we are in the air).—"You'll ruin us—you, me, and your father and mother. Yes! What do you think I work and slave myself for but for you and yours? Ruin us all. I say, if you talk in that way before Bullion! His heart is as hard as the Bank of England's,—and quite right he is too. Fellow-creatures,—stuff! I have renounced that delusion,—the generous follies of my youth! I begin at last to live for myself,—that is, for self and relatives. I shall succeed this time, you'll see!"

Pisistratus.—"Indeed, uncle, I hope so sincerely; and, to do you justice, there is always something very clever in your ideas, only they don't—"

Uncle Jack (interrupting me with a groan).—"The fortunes that other men have gained by my ideas,—shocking to think of! What! and shall I be reproached if I live no longer for such a set of thieving, greedy, ungrateful knaves? No, no! Number One shall be my maxim; and I'll make

you a Croesus, my boy, I will.”

Pisistratus, after grateful acknowledgments for all prospective benefits, inquires how long Jack has been in Australia; what brought him into the colony; and what are his present views. Learns, to his astonishment, that Uncle Jack has been four years in the colony; that he sailed the year after Pisistratus,—induced, he says, by that illustrious example and by some mysterious agency or commission, which he will not explain, emanating either from the Colonial Office or an Emigration Company. Uncle Jack has been thriving wonderfully since he abandoned his fellow-creatures. His first speculation, on arriving at the colony, was in buying some houses in Sydney, which (by those fluctuations in prices common to the extremes of the colonial mind, which is one while skipping up the rainbow with Hope, and at another plunging into Acherontian abysses with Despair) he bought excessively cheap, and sold excessively dear. But his grand experiment has been in connection with the infant settlement of Adelaide, of which he considers himself one of the first founders; and as, in the rush of emigration which poured to that favored establishment in the earlier years of its existence,—rolling on its tide all manner of credulous and inexperienced adventurers, vast sums were lost, so of those sums certain fragments and pickings were easily gripped and gathered up by a man of Uncle Jack’s readiness and dexterity. Uncle Jack had contrived to procure excellent letters of introduction to the colonial grandees; he got into close connection with some of the principal parties seeking to establish a monopoly of land (which has since been in great measure effected, by raising the price, and excluding the small fry of petty capitalists); and effectually imposed on them as a man with a vast knowledge of public business, in the confidence of great men at home, considerable influence with the English press, etc. And no discredit to their discernment; for Jack, when he pleased, had a way with him that was almost irresistible. In this manner he contrived to associate himself and his earnings with men really of large capital and long practical experience in the best mode by which that capital might be employed. He was thus admitted into partnership (so far as his means went) with Mr. Bullion, who was one of the largest sheep-owners and land-holders in the colony,—though, having many other nests to feather, that gentleman resided in state at Sydney, and left his runs and stations to the care of overseers and superintendents. But land-jobbing was Jack’s special delight; and an ingenious German having lately declared that the neighborhood of Adelaide betrayed the existence of those mineral treasures which have since been brought to day, Mr. Tibbets had persuaded Bullion and the other gentlemen now accompanying him to undertake the land journey from Sydney to Adelaide, privily and quietly, to ascertain the truth of the German’s report, which was at present very little believed. If the ground failed of mines, Uncle Jack’s account convinced his associates that mines quite as profitable might be found in the pockets of the raw adventurers who were ready to buy one year at the dearest market, and driven to sell the next at the cheapest.

"But," concluded Uncle Jack, with a sly look, and giving me a poke in the ribs, "I've had to do with mines before now, and know what they are. I'll let nobody but you into my pet scheme; you shall go shares if you like. The scheme is as plain as a problem in Euclid: if the German is right, and there are mines, why, the mines will be worked. Then miners must be employed; but miners must eat, drink, and spend their money. The thing is to get that money. Do you take?"

Pisistratus.—"Not at all!"

Uncle Jack (majestically).—"A Great Grog and Store Depot! The miners want grog and stores; come to your depot; you take their money; Q. E. D.! Shares,—eh, you dog? Cribs, as we said at school. Put in a paltry thousand or two, and you shall go halves."

Pisistratus (vehemently).—"Not for all the mines of Potosi."

Uncle Jack (good-humoredly).—"Well, it sha'n't be the worse for you. I sha'n't alter my will, in spite of your want of confidence. Your young friend,—that Mr. Vivian, I think you call him: intelligent-looking fellow; sharper than the other, I guess,—would he like a share?"

Pisistratus.—"In the grog depot? You had better ask him!"

Uncle Jack.—"What! you pretend to be aristocratic in the Bush? Too good. Ha, ha—they're calling to me; we must be off."

Pisistratus.—"I will ride with you a few miles. What say you, Vivian? and you, Guy?" (As the whole party now joined us.)

Guy prefers basking in the sun and reading the "Lives of the Poets." Vivian assents; we accompany the party till sunset. Major MacBlarney prodigalizes his offers of service in every conceivable department of life, and winds up with an assurance that if we want anything in those departments connected with engineering,—such as mining, mapping, surveying, etc.,—he will serve us, bedad, for nothing, or next to it. We suspect Major MacBlarney to be a civil engineer suffering under the innocent hallucination that he has been in the army.

Mr. Speck lets out to me, in a confidential whisper, that Mr. Bullion is monstrous rich, and has made his fortune from small beginnings, by never letting a good thing go. I think of Uncle Jack's pickled onion and Mr. Speck's meerschaum, and perceive, with respectful admiration, that Mr. Bullion acts uniformly on one grand system. Ten minutes afterwards, Mr. Bullion observes, in a tone equally confidential, that Mr. Speck, though so smiling and civil, is as sharp as a needle, and that if I want any shares in the new speculation, or indeed in any other, I had better come at once to Bullion, who would not deceive me for my weight in gold. "Not," added Bullion, "that I have anything to say against Speck. He is

well enough to do in the world,—a warm man, sir; and when a man is really warm, I am the last person to think of his little faults and turn on him the cold shoulder.”

”Adieu!” said Uncle Jack, pulling out once more his pocket-handkerchief; ”my love to all at home.” And sinking his voice into a whisper: ”If ever you think better of the Grog and Store Depot, nephew, you’ll find an uncle’s heart in this bosom!”

(1) A damper is a cake of flour baked without yeast, in the ashes

CHAPTER II.

It was night as Vivian and myself rode slowly home. Night in Australia! How impossible to describe its beauty Heaven seems, in that new world, so much nearer to earth! Every star stands out so bright and particular as if fresh from the time when the Maker willed it. And the moon like a large silvery sun,—the least object on which it shines so distinct and so still. (1) Now and then a sound breaks the silence, but a sound so much in harmony with the solitude that it only deepens its charms. Hark! the low cry of the night-bird from yonder glen amidst the small gray gleaming rocks. Hark! as night deepens, the bark of the distant watch-dog, or the low, strange howl of his more savage species, from which he defends the fold. Hark! the echo catches the sound, and flings it sportively from hill to hill,—farther and farther and farther down, till all again is hushed, and the flowers hang noiseless over your head as you ride through a grove of the giant gum-trees. Now the air is literally charged with the odors, and the sense of fragrance grows almost painful in its pleasure. You quicken your pace, and escape again into the open plains and the full moonlight, and through the slender tea-trees catch the gleam of the river, and in the exquisite fineness of the atmosphere hear the soothing sound of its murmur.

Pisistratus.—”And this land has become the heritage of our people! Methinks I see, as I gaze around, the scheme of the All-beneficent Father disentangling itself clear through the troubled history of mankind. How mysteriously, while Europe rears its populations and fulfils its civilizing mission, these realms have been concealed from its eyes,—divulged to us just as civilization needs the solution to its problems; a vent for feverish energies, baffled in the crowd; offering bread to the famished, hope to the desperate; in very truth enabling the ’New World to redress the balance of the Old.’ Here, what a Latium for the wandering spirits,—

”’On various seas by various tempests tossed.’

"Here, the actual Aeneid passes before our eyes. From the huts of the exiles scattered over this hardier Italy, who cannot see in the future

"'A race from whence new Alban sires shall come,
And the long glories of a future Rome'?"

Vivian (mournfully).—"Is it from the outcasts of the work-house, the prison, and the transport-ship that a second Rome is to arise?"

Pisistratus.—"There is something in this new soil—in the labor it calls forth, in the hope it inspires, in the sense of property, which I take to be the core of social morals—that expedites the work of redemption with marvellous rapidity. Take them altogether, whatever their origin, or whatever brought them hither, they are a fine, manly, frank-hearted race, these colonists now!—rude, not mean, especially in the Bush; and, I suspect, will ultimately become as gallant and honest a population as that now springing up in South Australia, from which convicts are excluded,—and happily excluded,—for the distinction will sharpen emulation. As to the rest, and in direct answer to your question, I fancy even the emancipist part of our population every whit as respectable as the mongrel robbers under Romulus."

Vivian.—"But were they not soldiers,—I mean the first Romans?"

Pisistratus.—"My dear cousin, we are in advance of those grim outcasts if we can get lands, houses, and wives (though the last is difficult, and it is well that we have no white Sabines in the neighborhood) without that same soldiering which was the necessity of their existence."

Vivian (after a pause).—"I have written to my father, and to yours more fully,—stating in the one letter my wish, in the other trying to explain the feelings from which it springs."

Pisistratus.—"Are the letters gone?"

Vivian.—"Yes."

Pisistratus.—"And you would not show them to me!"

Vivian.—"Do not speak so reproachfully. I promised your father to pour out my whole heart to him, whenever it was troubled and at strife. I promise you now that I will go by his advice."

Pisistratus (disconsolately).—"What is there in this military life for which you yearn that can yield you more food for healthful excitement and stirring adventure than your present pursuits afford?"

Vivian.—"Distinction! You do not see the difference between us. You have but a fortune to make,—I have a name to redeem; you look calmly on

to the future,—I have a dark blot to erase from the past.”

Pisistratus (soothingly).—“It is erased. Five years of no weak bewailings, but of manly reform, steadfast industry, conduct so blameless that even Guy (whom I look upon as the incarnation of blunt English honesty) half doubts whether you are ‘cute enough for ‘a station;’ a character already so high that I long for the hour when you will again take your father’s spotless name, and give me the pride to own our kinship to the world,—all this surely redeems the errors arising from an uneducated childhood and a wandering youth.”

Vivian (leaning over his horse, and putting his hand on my shoulder).—“My dear friend, what do I owe you!” Then recovering his emotion, and pushing on at a quicker pace, while he continues to speak, “But can you not see that, just in proportion as my comprehension of right would become clear and strong, so my conscience would become also more sensitive and reproachful; and the better I understand my gallant father, the more I must desire to be as he would have had his son. Do you think it would content him, could he see me branding cattle and bargaining with bullock drivers? Was it not the strongest wish of his heart that I should adopt his own career? Have I not heard you say that he would have had you too a soldier, but for your mother? I have no mother! If I made thousands, and tens of thousands, by this ignoble calling, would they give my father half the pleasure that he would feel at seeing my name honorably mentioned in a despatch? No, no! You have banished the gypsy blood, and now the soldier’s breaks out! Oh, for one glorious day in which I may clear my way into fair repute, as our fathers before us!—when tears of proud joy may flow from those eyes that have wept such hot drops at my shame; when she, too, in her high station beside that sleek lord, may say, ‘His heart was not so vile, after all!’ Don’t argue with me,—it is in vain! Pray, rather, that I may have leave to work out my own way; for I tell you that if condemned to stay here, I may not murmur aloud,—I may go through this round of low duties as the brute turns the wheel of a mill; but my heart will prey on itself, and you shall soon write on my gravestone the epitaph of the poor poet you told us of whose true disease was the thirst of glory,—‘Here lies one whose name was writ in water.’”

I had no answer; that contagious ambition made my own veins run more warmly, and my own heart beat with a louder tumult. Amidst the pastoral scenes, and under the tranquil moonlight of the New, the Old World, even in me, rude Bushman, claimed for a while its son. But as we rode on, the air, so inexpressibly buoyant, yet soothing as an anodyne, restored me to peaceful Nature. Now the flocks, in their snowy clusters, were seen sleeping under the stars; hark! the welcome of the watch-dogs; see the light gleaming far from the chink of the door! And, pausing, I said aloud: “No, there is more glory in laying these rough foundations of a mighty state, though no trumpets resound with your victory, though no laurels shall shadow your tomb, than in forcing the onward progress of your race over burning cities and hecatombs of men!” I looked round for

Vivian's answer; but ere I spoke he had spurred from my side, and I saw the wild dogs slinking back from the hoofs of his horse as he rode at speed on the sward through the moonlight.

(1) "I have frequently," says Mr. Wilkinson, in his invaluable work upon South Australia, at once so graphic and so practical, "been out on a journey in such a night, and whilst allowing the horse his own time to walk along the road, have solaced myself by reading in the still moonlight."

CHAPTER III.

The weeks and the months rolled on, and the replies to Vivian's letters came at last; I foreboded too well their purport. I knew that my father could not set himself in opposition to the deliberate and cherished desire of a man who had now arrived at the full strength of his understanding, and must be left at liberty to make his own election of the paths of life. Long after that date I saw Vivian's letter to my father; and even his conversation had scarcely prepared me for the pathos of that confession of a mind remarkable alike for its strength and its weakness. If born in the age, or submitted to the influences, of religious enthusiasm, here was a nature that, awaking from sin, could not have been contented with the sober duties of mediocre goodness; that would have plunged into the fiery depths of monkish fanaticism, wrestled with the fiend in the hermitage, or marched barefoot on the infidel with a sackcloth for armor,—the cross for a sword. Now, the impatient desire for redemption took a more mundane direction, but with something that seemed almost spiritual in its fervor. And this enthusiasm flowed through strata of such profound melancholy! Deny it a vent, and it might sicken into lethargy or fret itself into madness,—give it the vent, and it might vivify and fertilize as it swept along.

My father's reply to this letter was what might be expected. It gently reinforced the old lessons in the distinctions between aspirations towards the perfecting ourselves,—aspirations that are never in vain,—and the morbid passion for applause from others, which shifts conscience from our own bosoms to the confused Babel of the crowd and calls it "fame." But my father in his counsels did not seek to oppose a mind so obstinately bent upon a single course,—he sought rather to guide and strengthen it in the way it should go. The seas of human life are wide. Wisdom may suggest the voyage, but it must first look to the condition of the ship and the nature of the merchandise to exchange. Not every vessel that sails from Tarshish can bring back the gold of Ophir; but shall it therefore rot in the harbor? No; give its sails to the wind! But I had expected that Roland's letter to his son would have been full of joy and exultation,—joy there was none in it, yet exultation there

might be, though serious, grave, and subdued. In the proud assent that the old soldier gave to his son's wish, in his entire comprehension of motives so akin to his own nature, there was yet a visible sorrow; it seemed even as if he constrained himself to the assent he gave. Not till I had read it again and again could I divine Roland's feelings while he wrote. At this distance of time I comprehend them well. Had he sent from his side, into noble warfare, some boy fresh to life, new to sin, with an enthusiasm pure and single-hearted as his own young chivalrous ardor, then, with all a soldier's joy, he had yielded a cheerful tribute to the hosts of England. But here he recognized, though perhaps dimly, not the frank, military fervor, but the stern desire of expiation; and in that thought he admitted forebodings that would have been otherwise rejected, so that at the close of the letter it seemed, not the fiery, war-seasoned Roland that wrote, but rather some timid, anxious mother. Warnings and entreaties and cautions not to be rash, and assurances that the best soldiers were ever the most prudent,—were these the counsels of the fierce veteran who at the head of the forlorn hope had mounted the wall at—, his sword between his teeth?

But whatever his presentiments, Roland had yielded at once to his son's prayer, hastened to London at the receipt of his letter, obtained a commission in a regiment now in active service in India; and that commission was made out in his son's name. The commission, with an order to join the regiment as soon as possible, accompanied the letter.

And Vivian, pointing to the name addressed to him, said, "Now indeed I may resume this name, and next to Heaven will I hold it sacred! It shall guide me to glory in life, or my father shall read it, without shame, on my tomb!" I see him before me as he stood then,—his form erect, his dark eyes solemn in their light, a serenity in his smile, a grandeur on his brow, that I had never marked till then! Was that the same man I had recoiled from as the sneering cynic, shuddered at as the audacious traitor, or wept over as the cowering outcast? How little the nobleness of aspect depends on symmetry of feature, or the mere proportions of form! What dignity robes the man who is filled with a lofty thought!

CHAPTER IV.

He is gone; he has left a void in my existence. I had grown to love him so well; I had been so proud when men praised him. My love was a sort of self-love,—I had looked upon him in part as the work of my own hands. I am a long time ere I can settle back, with good heart, to my pastoral life. Before my cousin went, we cast up our gains and settled our shares. When he resigned the allowance which Roland had made him,

his father secretly gave to me, for his use, a sum equal to that which I and Guy Bolding brought into the common stock. Roland had raised a sum upon mortgage; and while the interest was a trivial deduction from his income, compared to the former allowance, the capital was much more useful to his son than a mere yearly payment could have been. Thus, between us, we had a considerable sum for Australian settlers,—£4,500. For the first two years we made nothing,—indeed, great part of the first year was spent in learning our art, at the station of an old settler. But at the end of the third year, our flocks having then become very considerable, we cleared a return beyond my most sanguine expectations. And when my cousin left, just in the sixth year of exile, our shares amounted to £4,000 each, exclusive of the value of the two stations. My cousin had at first wished that I should forward his share to his father; but he soon saw that Roland would never take it, and it was finally agreed that it should rest in my hands, for me to manage for him, send him out an interest at five per cent, and devote the surplus profits to the increase of his capital. I had now, therefore, the control of £12,000, and we might consider ourselves very respectable capitalists. I kept on the cattle station, by the aid of the Will-o'-the-Wisp, for about two years after Vivian's departure (we had then had it altogether for five). At the end of that time, I sold it and the stock to great advantage. And the sheep—for the "brand" of which I had a high reputation—having wonderfully prospered in the mean while, I thought we might safely extend our speculations into new ventures. Glad, too, of a change of scene, I left Bolding in charge of the flocks and bent my course to Adelaide, for the fame of that new settlement had already disturbed the peace of the Bush. I found Uncle Jack residing near Adelaide in a very handsome villa, with all the signs and appurtenances of colonial opulence; and report, perhaps, did not exaggerate the gains he had made,—so many strings to his bow, and each arrow, this time, seemed to have gone straight to the white of the butts. I now thought I had acquired knowledge and caution sufficient to avail myself of Uncle Jack's ideas, without ruining myself by following them out in his company; and I saw a kind of retributive justice in making his brain minister to the fortunes which his ideality and constructiveness, according to Squills, had served so notably to impoverish. I must here gratefully acknowledge that I owed much to this irregular genius. The investigation of the supposed mines had proved unsatisfactory to Mr. Bullion, and they were not fairly discovered till a few years after. But Jack had convinced himself of their existence, and purchased, on his own account, "for an old song," some barren land which he was persuaded would prove to him a Golconda, one day or other, under the euphonious title (which, indeed, it ultimately established) of the "Tibbets' Wheal." The suspension of the mines, however, fortunately suspended the existence of the Grog and Store Depot, and Uncle Jack was now assisting in the foundation of Port Philip. Profiting by his advice, I adventured in that new settlement some timid and wary purchases, which I resold to considerable advantage. Meanwhile I must not omit to state briefly what, since my departure from England, had been the ministerial career of Trevanion.

That refining fastidiousness, that scrupulosity of political conscience, which had characterized him as an independent member, and often served, in the opinion both of friend and of foe, to give the attribute of general impracticability to a mind that, in all details, was so essentially and laboriously practical, might perhaps have founded Trevanion's reputation as a minister if he could have been a minister without colleagues,—if, standing alone, and from the necessary height, he could have placed, clear and single, before the—world, his exquisite honesty of purpose and the width of a statesmanship marvellously accomplished and comprehensive. But Trevanion could not amalgamate with others, nor subscribe to the discipline of a cabinet in which he was not the chief, especially in a policy which must have been thoroughly abhorrent to such a nature,—a policy that, of late years, has distinguished not one faction alone, but has seemed so forced upon the more eminent political leaders on either side that they who take the more charitable view of things may perhaps hold it to arise from the necessity of the age, fostered by the temper of the public: I mean the policy of Expediency. Certainly not in this book will I introduce the angry elements of party politics; and how should I know much about them? All that I have to say is that, right or wrong, such a policy must have been at war, every moment, with each principle of Trevanion's statesmanship, and fretted each fibre of his moral constitution. The aristocratic combinations which his alliance with the Castleton interest had brought to his aid served perhaps to fortify his position in the Cabinet; yet aristocratic combinations were of small avail against what seemed the atmospherical epidemic of the age. I could see how his situation had preyed on his mind when I read a paragraph in the newspapers, "that it was reported, on good authority, that Mr. Trevanion had tendered his resignation, but had been prevailed upon to withdraw it, as his retirement at that moment would break up the government." Some months afterwards came another paragraph, to the effect "that Mr. Trevanion was taken suddenly ill, and that it was feared his illness was of a nature to preclude his resuming his official labors." Then Parliament broke up. Before it met again, Mr. Trevanion was gazetted as Earl of Ulverstone,—a title that had been once in his family,—and had left the Administration, unable to encounter the fatigues of office. To an ordinary man the elevation to an earldom, passing over the lesser honors in the peerage, would have seemed no mean close to a political career; but I felt what profound despair of striving against circumstance for utility—what entanglements with his colleagues, whom he could neither conscientiously support, nor, according to his high old-fashioned notions of party honor and etiquette, energetically oppose—had driven him to abandon that stormy scene in which his existence had been passed. The House of Lords, to that active intellect, was as the retirement of some warrior of old into the cloisters of a convent. The gazette that chronicled the earldom of Ulverstone was the proclamation that Albert Trevanion lived no more for the world of public men. And, indeed, from that date his career vanished out of sight. Trevanion died,—the Earl of Ulverstone made no

sign.

I had hitherto written but twice to Lady Ellinor during my exile,—once upon the marriage of Fanny with Lord Castleton, which took place about six months after I sailed from England, and again when thanking her husband for some rare animals, equine, pastoral, and bovine, which he had sent as presents to Bolding and myself. I wrote again after Trevanion's elevation to the peerage, and received, in due time, a reply confirming all my impressions; for it was full of bitterness and gall, accusations of the world, fears for the country,—Richelieu himself could not have taken a gloomier view of things when his levees were deserted and his power seemed annihilated before the "Day of Dupes." Only one gleam of comfort appeared to visit Lady Ulverstone's breast, and thence to settle prospectively over the future of the world,—a second son had been born to Lord Castleton; to that son would descend the estates of Ulverstone and the representation of that line distinguished by Trevanion and enriched by Trevanion's wife. Never was there a child of such promise! Not Virgil himself, when he called on the Sicilian Muses to celebrate the advent of a son to Pollio, ever sounded a loftier strain. Here was one, now, perchance, engaged on words of two syllables, called:

"By laboring Nature to sustain
The nodding frame of heaven and earth and main,
See to their base restored, earth, sea, and air,
And joyful ages from behind in crowding ranks appear!"

Happy dream which Heaven sends to grandparents,—rebaptism of Hope in the font whose drops sprinkle the grandchild!

Time flies on; affairs continue to prosper. I am just leaving the bank at Adelaide with a satisfied air when I am stopped in the street by bowing acquaintances who never shook me by the hand before. They shake me by the hand now, and cry, "I wish you joy, sir. That brave fellow, your namesake, is of course your near relation."

"What do you mean?"

"Have you not seen the papers? Here they are."

"Gallant Conduct of Ensign De Caxton! Promoted to a Lieutenancy on the Field!"

I wipe my eyes, and cry: "Thank Heaven,—it is my cousin!" Then new hand-shakings, new groups gather round. I feel taller by the head than I was before! We grumbling English, always quarrelling with each other,—the world not wide enough to hold us; and yet, when in the far land some bold deed is done by a countryman, how we feel that we are brothers; how our hearts warm to each other! What a letter I wrote home, and how joyously I went back to the Bush! The Will-o'-the-Wisp

has attained to a cattle station of his own. I go fifty miles out of my way to tell him the news and give him the newspaper; for he knows now that his old master, Vivian, is a Cumberland man,—a Caxton. Poor Will-o'-the-Wisp! The tea that night tasted uncommonly like whiskey-punch! Father Mathew, forgive us; but if you had been a Cumberland man, and heard the Will-o'-the-Wisp roaring out, "Blue Bonnets over the Borders," I think your tea, too, would not have come out of the—caddy!

CHAPTER V.

A great change has occurred in our household. Guy's father is dead,—his latter years cheered by the accounts of his son's steadiness and prosperity, and by the touching proofs thereof which Guy has exhibited; for he insisted on repaying to his father the old college debts and the advance of the £1,500, begging that the money might go towards his sister's portion. Now, after the old gentleman's death, the sister resolved to come out and live with her dear brother Guy. Another wing is built to the hut. Ambitious plans for a new stone house, to be commenced the following year, are entertained; and Guy has brought back from Adelaide not only a sister, but, to my utter astonishment, a wife, in the shape of a fair friend by whom the sister is accompanied.

The young lady did quite right to come to Australia if she wanted to be married. She was very pretty, and all the beaux in Adelaide were round her in a moment. Guy was in love the first day, in a rage with thirty rivals the next, in despair the third, put the question the fourth, and before the fifteenth was a married man, hastening back with a treasure, of which he fancied all the world was conspiring to rob him. His sister was quite as pretty as her friend, and she, too, had offers enough the moment she landed,—only she was romantic and fastidious; and I fancy Guy told her that "I was just made for her."

However, charming though she be,—with pretty blue eyes and her brother's frank smile,—I am not enchanted. I fancy she lost all chance of my heart by stepping across the yard in a pair of silk shoes. If I were to live in the Bush, give me a wife as a companion who can ride well, leap over a ditch, walk beside me when I go forth, gun in hand, for a shot at the kangaroos. But I dare not go on with the list of a Bush husband's requisites. This change, however, serves, for various reasons, to quicken my desire of return. Ten years have now elapsed, and I have already obtained a much larger fortune than I had calculated to make. Sorely to Guy's honest grief, I therefore wound up our affairs and dissolved partnership; for he had decided to pass his life in the colony,—and with his pretty wife, who has grown very fond of him, I don't wonder at it. Guy takes my share of the station and stock off my hands; and, all accounts squared between us, I bid farewell to the Bush.

Despite all the motives that drew my heart homeward, it was not without participation in the sorrow of my old companions that I took leave of those I might never see again on this side the grave. The meanest man in my employ had grown a friend; and when those hard hands grasped mine, and from many a breast that once had waged fierce war with the world came the soft blessing to the Homeward-bound,—with a tender thought for the Old England that had been but a harsh stepmother to them,—I felt a choking sensation which I suspect is little known to the friendships of Mayfair and St. James's. I was forced to get off with a few broken words, when I had meant to part with a long speech,—perhaps the broken words pleased the audience better. Spurring away, I gained a little eminence and looked back. There were the poor faithful fellows gathered in a ring, watching me, their hats off, their hands shading their eyes from the sun. And Guy had thrown himself on the ground, and I heard his loud sobs distinctly. His wife was leaning over his shoulder, trying to soothe. Forgive him, fair helpmate; you will be all the world to him—to-morrow! And the blue-eyed sister, where was she? Had she no tears for the rough friend who laughed at the silk shoes, and taught her how to hold the reins and never fear that the old pony would run away with her? What matter? If the tears were shed, they were hidden tears. No shame in them, fair Ellen! Since then thou hast wept happy tears over thy first-born,—those tears have long ago washed away all bitterness in the innocent memories of a girl's first fancy.

CHAPTER VI.

Dated From Adelaide.

Imagine my wonder! Uncle Jack has just been with me, and—But hear the dialogue.

Uncle Jack.—"So you are positively going back to that smoky, fusty Old England, just when you are on your high road to a plum,—a plum, sir, at least! They all say there is not a more rising young man in the colony. I think Bullion would take you into partnership. What are you in such a hurry for?"

Pisistratus.—"To see my father and mother and Uncle Roland, and—" (was about to name some one else, but stops). "You see, my dear uncle, I came out solely with the idea of repairing my father's losses in that unfortunate speculation of 'The Capitalist'!"

Uncle Jack (coughs and ejaculates).—"That villain Peck!"

Pisistratus.—"And to have a few thousands to invest in poor Roland's acres. The object is achieved: why should I stay?"

Uncle Jack.—"A few paltry thousands, when in twenty years more, at the farthest, you would wallow in gold!"

Pisistratus.—"A man learns in the Bush how happy life can be with plenty of employment and very little money. I shall practise that lesson in England."

Uncle Jack.—"Your mind's made up?"

Pisistratus.—"And my place in the ship taken."

Uncle Jack.—"Then there's no more to be said." (Hums, haws, and examines his nails,—filbert-nails, not a speck on them. Then suddenly, and jerking up his head) "That 'Capitalist'! it has been on my conscience, nephew, ever since; and, somehow or other, since I have abandoned the cause of my fellow-creatures, I think I have cared more for my relations."

Pisistratus (smiling as he remembers his father's shrewd predictions thereon).—"Naturally, my dear uncle; any child who has thrown a stone into a pond knows that a circle disappears as it widens."

Uncle Jack.—"Very true,—I shall make a note of that, applicable to my next speech in defence of what they call the 'land monopoly.' Thank you,—stone, circle! [Jots down notes in his pocket-book.] But to return to the point: I am well off now, I have neither wife nor child, and I feel that I ought to bear my share in your father's loss,—it was our joint speculation. And your father—good, dear Austin!—paid my debts into the bargain. And how cheering the punch was that night, when your mother wanted to scold poor Jack! And the L300 Austin lent me when I left him: nephew, that was the remaking of me,—the acorn of the oak I have planted. So here they are [added Uncle Jack, with a heroic effort, and he extracted from the pocket-book bills for a sum between three and four thousand pounds]. There, it is done; and I shall sleep better for it!" With that Uncle Jack got up, and bolted out of the room.

Ought I to take the money? Why, I think yes,—it is but fair. Jack must be really rich, and can well spare the money; besides, if he wants it again, I know my father will let him have it. And, indeed, Jack caused the loss of the whole sum lost on "The Capitalist," etc.: and this is not quite the half of what my father paid away. But is it not fine in Uncle Jack? Well, my father was quite right in his milder estimate of Jack's scalene conformation, and it is hard to judge of a man when he is needy and down in the world. When one grafts one's ideas on one's neighbor's money, they are certainly not so grand as when they spring from one's own.

Uncle Jack (popping his head into the room).—"And, you see, you can

double that money if you will just leave it in my hands for a couple of years,—you have no notion what I shall make of the Tibbets' Wheal! Did I tell you? The German was quite right; I have been offered already seven times the sum which I gave for the land. But I am now looking out for a company: let me put you down for shares to the amount at least of those trumpery bills. Cent per cent,—I guarantee cent per cent!" And Uncle Jack stretches out those famous smooth hands of his, with a tremulous motion of the ten eloquent fingers.

Pisistratus.—"Ah! my dear uncle, if you repent—"

Uncle Jack.—"Repent, when I offer you cent per cent, on my personal guarantee!"

Pisistratus (carefully putting the bills into his breast coat-pocket).—
"Then if you don't repent, my dear uncle, allow me to shake you by the hand and say that I will not consent to lessen my esteem and admiration for the high principle which prompts this restitution, by confounding it with trading associations of loans, interests, and copper-mines. And, you see, since this sum is paid to my father, I have no right to invest it without his permission."

Uncle Jack (with emotion). "'Esteem, admiration, high principle!'—these are pleasant words from you, nephew. [Then, shaking his head, and smiling] You sly dog! you are quite right; get the bills cashed at once. And hark ye, sir, just keep out of my way, will you? And don't let me coax from you a farthing." Uncle Jack slams the door and rushes out. Pisistratus draws the bills warily from his pocket, half suspecting they must already have turned into withered leaves, like fairy money; slowly convinces himself that the bills are good bills; and by lively gestures testifies his delight and astonishment. Scene changes.