

MY NOVEL - VOLUME 4.

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BOOK FOURTH.

INITIAL CHAPTER.

COMPRISING MR. CAXTON'S OPINIONS ON THE MATRIMONIAL STATE, SUPPORTED BY LEARNED AUTHORITIES.

"It was no bad idea of yours, Pisistratus," said my father, graciously, "to depict the heightened affections and the serious intention of Signor Riccabocca by a single stroke,— /He left of his spectacles! / Good."

"Yet," quoth my uncle, "I think Shakspeare represents a lover as falling into slovenly habits, neglecting his person, and suffering his hose to be ungartered, rather than paying that attention to his outer man which induces Signor Riccabocca to leave off his spectacles, and look as handsome as nature will permit him."

"There are different degrees and many phases of the passion," replied my father. "Shakspeare is speaking of an ill-treated, pining, woe-begone lover, much aggrieved by the cruelty of his mistress,—a lover who has found it of no avail to smarten himself up, and has fallen despondently into the opposite extreme. Whereas Signor Riccabocca has nothing to complain of in the barbarity of Miss Jemima."

"Indeed he has not!" cried Blanche, tossing her head,—"forward creature!"

"Yes, my dear," said my mother, trying her best to look stately, "I am decidedly of opinion that, in that respect, Pisistratus has lowered the dignity of the sex. Not intentionally," added my mother, mildly, and afraid she had said something too bitter; "but it is very hard for a man to describe us women."

The captain nodded approvingly; Mr. Squills smiled; my father quietly resumed the thread of his discourse.

"To continue," quoth he. "Riccabocca has no reason to despair of success in his suit, nor any object in moving his mistress to compassion. He

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may, therefore, very properly tie up his garters and leave off his spectacles. What do you say, Mr. Squills?—for, after all, since love-making cannot fail to be a great constitutional derangement, the experience of a medical man must be the best to consult.”

”Mr. Caxton,” replied Squills, obviously flattered, ”you are quite right: when a man makes love, the organs of self-esteem and desire of applause are greatly stimulated, and therefore, of course, he sets himself off to the best advantage. It is only, as you observe, when, like Shakspeare’s lover, he has given up making love as a bad job, and has received that severe hit on the ganglions which the cruelty of a mistress inflicts, that he neglects his personal appearance: he neglects it, not because he is in love, but because his nervous system is depressed. That was the cause, if you remember, with poor Major Prim. He wore his wig all awry when Susan Smart jilted him; but I set it right for him.”

”By shaming Miss Smart into repentance, or getting him a new sweetheart?” asked my uncle.

”Pooh!” answered Squills, ”by quinine and cold bathing.”

”We may therefore grant,” renewed my father, ”that, as a general rule, the process of courtship tends to the spruceness, and even foppery, of the individual engaged in the experiment, as Voltaire has very prettily proved somewhere. Nay, the Mexicans, indeed, were of opinion that the lady at least ought to continue those cares of her person even after marriage. There is extant, in Sahagun’s ’History of New Spain,’ the advice of an Aztec or Mexican mother to her daughter, in which she says, ’That your husband may not take you in dislike, adorn yourself, wash yourself, and let your garments be clean.’ It is true that the good lady adds, ’Do it in moderation; since if every day you are washing yourself and your clothes, the world will say that you are over-delicate; and particular people will call you—TAPETZON TINEMAXOCH!’ What those words precisely mean,” added my father, modestly, ”I cannot say, since I never had the opportunity to acquire the ancient Aztec language,—but something very opprobrious and horrible, no doubt.”

”I dare say a philosopher like Signor Riccabocca,” said my uncle, ”was not himself very /tapetzon tine/—what d’ ye call it?—and a good healthy English wife, that poor affectionate Jemima, was thrown away upon him.”

”Roland,” said my father, ”you don’t like foreigners; a respectable prejudice, and quite natural in a man who has been trying his best to hew them in pieces and blow them up into splinters. But you don’t like philosophers either,—and for that dislike you have no equally good reason.”

”I only implied that they are not much addicted to soap and water,” said my uncle.

"A notable mistake. Many great philosophers have been very great beaux. Aristotle was a notorious fop. Buffon put on his best laced ruffles when he sat down to write, which implies that he washed his hands first. Pythagoras insists greatly on the holiness of frequent ablutions; and Horace—who, in his own way, was as good a philosopher as any the Romans produced—takes care to let us know what a neat, well-dressed, dapper little gentleman he was. But I don't think you ever read the 'Apology' of Apuleius?"

"Not I; what is it about?" asked the captain.

"About a great many things. It is that Sage's vindication from several malignant charges,—amongst others, and principally indeed, that of being much too refined and effeminate for a philosopher. Nothing can exceed the rhetorical skill with which he excuses himself for using—tooth-powder. 'Ought a philosopher,' he exclaims, 'to allow anything unclean about him, especially in the mouth,—the mouth, which is the vestibule of the soul, the gate of discourse, the portico of thought! Ah, but AEmilianus [the accuser of Apuleius] never opens his mouth but for slander and calumny,—tooth-powder would indeed be unbecoming to him! Or, if he use any, it will not be my good Arabian tooth powder, but charcoal and cinders. Ay, his teeth should be as foul as his language! And yet even the crocodile likes to have his teeth cleaned; insects get into them, and, horrible reptile though he be, he opens his jaws inoffensively to a faithful dentistical bird, who volunteers his beak for a toothpick.'"

My father was now warm in the subject he had started, and soared miles away from Riccabocca and "My Novel." "And observe," he exclaimed,—observe with what gravity this eminent Platonist pleads guilty to the charge of having a mirror. 'Why, what,' he exclaims, 'more worthy of the regards of a human creature than his own image' /nihil respectabilius homini quam formam suam/! Is not that one of our children the most dear to us who is called 'the picture of his father'? But take what pains you will with a picture, it can never be so like you as the face in your mirror! Think it discreditable to look with proper attention on one's self in the glass! Did not Socrates recommend such attention to his disciples,—did he not make a great moral agent of the speculum? The handsome, in admiring their beauty therein, were admonished that handsome is who handsome does; and the more the ugly stared at themselves, the more they became naturally anxious to hide the disgrace of their features in the loveliness of their merits. Was not Demosthenes always at his speculum? Did he not rehearse his causes before it as before a master in the art? He learned his eloquence from Plato, his dialectics from Eubulides; but as for his delivery—there, he came to the mirror!

"Therefore," concluded Mr. Caxton, returning unexpectedly to the subject,—therefore, it is no reason to suppose that Dr. Riccabocca is averse to cleanliness and decent care of the person because he is a philosopher; and, all things considered, he never showed himself more a

philosopher than when he left off his spectacles and looked his best.”

”Well,” said my mother, kindly, ”I only hope it may turn out happily. But I should have been better pleased if Pisistratus had not made Dr. Riccabocca so reluctant a wooer.”

”Very true,” said the captain; ”the Italian does not shine as a lover. Throw a little more fire into him, Pisistratus,—something gallant and chivalrous.”

”Fire! gallantry! chivalry!” cried my father, who had taken Riccabocca under his special protection; ”why, don’t you see that the man is described as a philosopher?—and I should like to know when a philosopher ever plunged into matrimony without considerable misgivings and cold shivers! Indeed, it seems that—perhaps before he was a philosopher—Riccabocca had tried the experiment, and knew what it was. Why, even that plain-speaking, sensible, practical man, Metellus Numidicus, who was not even a philosopher, but only a Roman censor, thus expressed himself in an exhortation to the people to perpetrate matrimony: ’If, O Quirites, we could do without wives, we should all dispense with that subject of care /ea molestia careremus/; but since nature has so managed it that we cannot live with women comfortably, nor without them at all, let us rather provide for the human race than our own temporary felicity.’”

Here the ladies set up such a cry of indignation, that both Roland and myself endeavoured to appease their wrath by hasty assurances that we utterly repudiated the damnable doctrine of Metellus Numidicus.

My father, wholly unmoved, as soon as a sullen silence was established, recommenced. ”Do not think, ladies,” said he, ”that you were without advocates at that day: there were many Romans gallant enough to blame the censor for a mode of expressing himself which they held to be equally impolite and injudicious. ’Surely,’ said they, with some plausibility, if Numidicus wished men to marry, he need not have referred so peremptorily to the disquietudes of the connection, and thus have made them more inclined to turn away from matrimony than give them a relish for it.’ But against these critics one honest man (whose name of Titus Castricius should not be forgotten by posterity) maintained that Metellus Numidicus could not have spoken more properly; ’For remark,’ said he, ’that Metellus was a censor, not a rhetorician. It becomes rhetoricians to adorn and disguise and make the best of things; but Metellus, /sanctus vir/,—a holy and blameless man, grave and sincere to wit, and addressing the Roman people in the solemn capacity of Censor,—was bound to speak the plain truth, especially as he was treating of a subject on which the observation of every day, and the experience of every life, could not leave the least doubt upon the mind of his audience.’ Still, Riccabocca, having decided to marry, has no doubt prepared himself to bear all the concomitant evils—as becomes a professed sage; and I own I admire the art with which Pisistratus has drawn the kind of woman most likely to suit a philosopher—”

Pisistratus bows, and looks round complacently; but recoils from two very peevish and discontented faces feminine.

MR. CAXTON (completing his sentence).—"Not only as regards mildness of temper and other household qualifications, but as regards the very person of the object of his choice. For you evidently remember, Pisistratus, the reply of Bias, when asked his opinion on marriage: [Long sentence in Greek]"

Pisistratus tries to look as if he had the opinion of Bias by heart, and nods acquiescingly.

MR. CAXTON.—"That is, my dears, 'The woman you would marry is either handsome or ugly: if handsome, she is *koine*,—namely, you don't have her to yourself; if ugly, she is *poine*,—that is, a fury.' But, as it is observed in Aulus Gellius (whence I borrow this citation), there is a wide interval between handsome and ugly. And thus Ennius, in his tragedy of 'Menalippus,' uses an admirable expression to designate women of the proper degree of matrimonial comeliness, such as a philosopher would select. He calls this degree *stata forma*,—a rational, mediocre sort of beauty, which is not liable to be either *koine* or *poine*. And Favorinus, who was a remarkably sensible man, and came from Provence—the male inhabitants of which district have always valued themselves on their knowledge of love and ladies—calls this said *stata forma* the beauty of wives,—the uxorial beauty. Ennius says that women of a *stata forma* are almost always safe and modest. Now, Jemima, you observe, is described as possessing this *stata forma*; and it is the nicety of your observation in this respect, which I like the most in the whole of your description of a philosopher's matrimonial courtship, Pisistratus (excepting only the stroke of the spectacles), for it shows that you had properly considered the opinion of Bias, and mastered all the counter logic suggested in Book v., chapter xi., of Aulus Gellius."

"For all that," said Blanche, half archly, half demurely, with a smile in the eye and a pout of the lip, "I don't remember that Pisistratus, in the days when he wished to be most complimentary, ever assured me that I had a *stata forma*,—a rational, mediocre sort of beauty."

"And I think," observed my uncle, "that when he comes to his real heroine, whoever she may be, he will not trouble his head much about either Bias or Aulus Gellius."

CHAPTER II.

Matrimony is certainly a great change in life. One is astonished not to find a notable alteration in one's friend, even if he or she have been only wedded a week. In the instance of Dr. and Mrs. Riccabocca the change was peculiarly visible. To speak first of the lady, as in chivalry bound, Mrs. Riccabocca had entirely renounced that melancholy which had characterized Miss Jemima; she became even sprightly and gay, and looked all the better and prettier for the alteration. She did not scruple to confess honestly to Mrs. Dale that she was now of opinion that the world was very far from approaching its end. But, in the meanwhile, she did not neglect the duty which the belief she had abandoned serves to inculcate,—“She set her house in order.” The cold and penurious elegance that had characterized the Casino disappeared like enchantment,—that is, the elegance remained, but the cold and penury fled before the smile of woman. Like Puss-in-Boots, after the nuptials of his master, Jackeymo only now caught minnows and sticklebacks for his own amusement. Jackeymo looked much plumper, and so did Riccabocca. In a word, the fair Jemima became an excellent wife. Riccabocca secretly thought her extravagant, but, like a wise man, declined to look at the house bills, and ate his joint in unrepentant silence.

Indeed there was so much unaffected kindness in the nature of Mrs. Riccabocca—beneath the quiet of her manner there beat so genially the heart of the Hazeldeans—that she fairly justified the favourable anticipations of Mrs. Dale. And though the doctor did not noisily boast of his felicity, nor, as some new married folks do, thrust it insultingly under the */nimis unctis naribus/*,—the turned-up noses of your surly old married folks,—nor force it gaudily and glaringly on the envious eyes of the single, you might still see that he was a more cheerful and light-hearted man than before. His smile was less ironical, his politeness less distant. He did not study Machiavelli so intensely,—and he did not return to the spectacles; which last was an excellent sign. Moreover, the humanizing influence of the tidy English wife might be seen in the improvement of his outward or artificial man. His clothes seemed to fit him better; indeed, the clothes were new. Mrs. Dale no longer remarked that the buttons were off the wristbands, which was a great satisfaction to her. But the sage still remained faithful to the pipe, the cloak, and the red silk umbrella. Mrs. Riccabocca had (to her credit be it spoken) used all becoming and wife-like arts against these three remnants of the old bachelor, Adam, but in vain. *”/Anima mia/*,” [Soul of mine]—said the doctor, tenderly, “I hold the cloak, the umbrella, and the pipe as the sole relics that remain to me of my native country. Respect and spare them.”

Mrs. Riccabocca was touched, and had the good sense to perceive that man, let him be ever so much married, retains certain signs of his ancient independence,—certain tokens of his old identity, which a wife, the most

despotic, will do well to concede. She conceded the cloak, she submitted to the umbrella, she overcame her abhorrence of the pipe. After all, considering the natural villany of our sex, she confessed to herself that she might have been worse off. But through all the calm and cheerfulness of Riccabocca, a nervous perturbation was sufficiently perceptible; it commenced after the second week of marriage; it went on increasing, till one bright sunny afternoon, as he was standing on his terrace, gazing down upon the road, at which Jackeymo was placed, lo, a stage-coach stopped! The doctor made a bound, and put both hands to his heart as if he had been shot; he then leaped over the balustrade, and his wife from her window beheld him flying down the hill, with his long hair streaming in the wind, till the trees hid him from her sight.

"Ah," thought she, with a natural pang of conjugal jealousy, "henceforth I am only second in his home. He has gone to welcome his child!" And at that reflection Mrs. Riccabocca shed tears.

But so naturally amiable was she, that she hastened to curb her emotion, and efface as well as she could the trace of a stepmother's grief. When this was done, and a silent, self-rebuking prayer murmured over, the good woman descended the stairs with alacrity, and summoning up her best smiles, emerged on the terrace.

She was repaid; for scarcely had she come into the open air, when two little arms were thrown around her, and the sweetest voice that ever came from a child's lips sighed out in broken English, "Good mamma, love me a little."

"Love you? with my whole heart!" cried the stepmother, with all a mother's honest passion. And she clasped the child to her breast.

"God bless you, my wife!" said Riccabocca, in a husky tone.

"Please take this too," added Jackeymo, in Italian, as well as his sobs would let him, and he broke off a great bough full of blossoms from his favourite orange-tree, and thrust it into his mistress's hand. She had not the slightest notion what he meant by it!

CHAPTER III.

Violante was indeed a bewitching child,—a child to whom I defy Mrs. Caudle herself (immortal Mrs. Caudle!) to have been a harsh stepmother.

Look at her now, as released from those kindly arms, she stands, still clinging with one hand to her new mamma, and holding out the other to Riccabocca, with those large dark eyes swimming in happy tears. What a

lovely smile! what an ingenuous, candid brow! She looks delicate, she evidently requires care, she wants the mother. And rare is the woman who would not love her the better for that! Still, what an innocent, infantine bloom in those clear, smooth cheeks! and in that slight frame, what exquisite natural grace!

"And this, I suppose, is your nurse, darling?" said Mrs. Riccabocca, observing a dark, foreign-looking woman, dressed very strangely, without cap or bonnet, but a great silver arrow stuck in her hair, and a filigree chain or necklace resting upon her kerchief.

"Ah, good Annetta," said Violante, in Italian. "Papa, she says she is to go back; but she is not to go back, is she?"

Riccabocca, who had scarcely before noticed the woman, started at that question, exchanged a rapid glance with Jackeymo, and then, muttering some inaudible excuse, approached the nurse, and, beckoning her to follow him, went away into the grounds. He did not return for more than an hour, nor did the woman then accompany him home. He said briefly to his wife that the nurse was obliged to return at once to Italy, and that she would stay in the village to catch the mail; that indeed she would be of no use in their establishment, as she could not speak a word of English; that he was sadly afraid Violante would pine for her. And Violante did pine at first. But still, to a child it is so great a thing to find a parent, to be at home, that, tender and grateful as Violante was, she could not be inconsolable while her father was there to comfort.

For the first few days, Riccabocca scarcely permitted any one to be with his daughter but himself. He would not even leave her alone with his Jemima. They walked out together,—sat together for hours in the belvidere. Then by degrees he began to resign her more and more to Jemima's care and tuition, especially in English, of which language at present she spoke only a few sentences (previously, perhaps, learned by heart) so as to be clearly intelligible.

CHAPTER IV.

There was one person in the establishment of Dr. Riccabocca who was satisfied neither with the marriage of his master nor the arrival of Violante,—and that was our friend Lenny Fairfield. Previous to the all-absorbing duties of courtship, the young peasant had secured a very large share of Riccabocca's attention. The sage had felt interest in the growth of this rude intelligence struggling up to light. But what with the wooing and what with the wedding, Lenny Fairfield had sunk very much out of his artificial position as pupil into his natural station of under-gardener. And on the arrival of Violante, he saw, with natural

bitterness, that he was clean forgotten, not only by Riccabocca, but almost by Jackeymo. It was true that the master still lent him books, and the servant still gave him lectures on horticulture. But Riccabocca had no time nor inclination now to amuse himself with enlightening that tumult of conjecture which the books created. And if Jackeymo had been covetous of those mines of gold buried beneath the acres now fairly taken from the squire (and good-naturedly added rent-free, as an aid to Jemima's dower), before the advent of the young lady whose future dowry the produce was to swell, now that she was actually under the eyes of the faithful servant, such a stimulus was given to his industry that he could think of nothing else but the land, and the revolution he designed to effect in its natural English crops. The garden, save only the orangetrees, was abandoned entirely to Lenny, and additional labourers were called in for the field work. Jackeymo had discovered that one part of the soil was suited to lavender, that another would grow camomile. He had in his heart apportioned a beautiful field of rich loam to flax; but against the growth of flax the squire set his face obstinately. That most lucrative, perhaps, of all crops when soil and skill suit, was formerly attempted in England much more commonly than it is now, since you will find few old leases do not contain a clause prohibitory of flax as an impoverishment of the land. And though Jackeymo learnedly endeavoured to prove to the squire that the flax itself contained particles which, if returned to the soil, repaid all that the crop took away, Mr. Hazeldean had his old-fashioned prejudices on the matter, which were insuperable. "My forefathers," quoth he, "did not put that clause in their leases without good cause; and as the Casino lands are entailed on Frank, I have no right to gratify your foreign whims at his expense."

To make up for the loss of the flax, Jackeymo resolved to convert a very nice bit of pasture into orchard ground, which he calculated would bring in L10 net per acre by the time Miss Violante was marriageable. At this the squire pished a little; but as it was quite clear that the land would be all the more valuable hereafter for the fruit-trees, he consented to permit the "grass-land" to be thus partially broken up.

All these changes left poor Lenny Fairfield very much to himself,—at a time when the new and strange devices which the initiation into book knowledge creates made it most desirable that he should have the constant guidance of a superior mind.

One evening after his work, as Lenny was returning to his mother's cottage, very sullen and very moody, he suddenly came in contact with Sprott the tinker.

CHAPTER V.

The tinker was seated under a hedge, hammering away at an old kettle, with a little fire burning in front of him, and the donkey hard by, indulging in a placid doze. Mr. Sprott looked up as Lenny passed, nodded kindly, and said,—

”Good evenin’, Lenny: glad to hear you be so ’spectably sitivated with Mounseer.”

”Ay,” answered Lenny, with a leaven of rancour in his recollections, ”you’re not ashamed to speak to me now that I am not in disgrace. But it was in disgrace, when it wasn’t my fault, that the real gentleman was most kind to me.”

”Ar-r, Lenny,” said the tinker, with a prolonged rattle in that said Ar-r, which was not without great significance. ”But you sees the real gentleman, who han’t got his bread to get, can hafford to ’spise his c’racter in the world. A poor tinker must be timbersome and nice in his ’sociations. But sit down here a bit, Lenny; I’ve summat to say to ye!”

”To me?”

”To ye. Give the neddy a shove out i’ the vay, and sit down, I say.”

Lenny rather reluctantly, and somewhat superciliously, accepted this invitation.

”I hears,” said the tinker, in a voice made rather indistinct by a couple of nails, which he had inserted between his teeth,—”I hears as how you be unkimmon fond of reading. I ha’ sum nice cheap books in my bag yonder,—sum as low as a penny.”

”I should like to see them,” said Lenny, his eyes sparkling.

The tinker rose, opened one of the panniers on the ass’s back, took out a bag, which he placed before Lenny, and told him to suit himself. The young peasant desired no better. He spread all the contents of the bag on the sward, and a motley collection of food for the mind was there,—food and poison, /serpentes avibus/ good and evil. Here Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, there ”The Age of Reason;” here Methodist Tracts, there ”True Principles of Socialism,”—Treatises on Useful Knowledge by sound learning actuated by pure benevolence, Appeals to Operatives by the shallowest reasoners, instigated by the same ambition that had moved Eratosthenes to the conflagration of a temple; works of fiction admirable as ”Robinson Crusoe,” or innocent as ”The Old English Baron,” beside coarse translations of such garbage as had rotted away the youth of France under Louis Quinze. This miscellany was an epitome, in short, of

the mixed World of Books, of that vast city of the Press, with its palaces and hovels, its aqueducts and sewers, which opens all alike to the naked eye and the curious mind of him to whom you say, in the tinker's careless phrase, "Suit yourself."

But it is not the first impulse of a nature healthful and still pure to settle in the hovel and lose itself amidst the sewers; and Lenny Fairfield turned innocently over the bad books, and selecting two or three of the best, brought them to the tinker, and asked the price.

"Why," said Mr. Sprott, putting on his spectacles, "you has taken the werry dearest: them 'ere be much cheaper, and more hinterestin'."

"But I don't fancy them," answered Lenny; "I don't understand what they are about, and this seems to tell one how the steam-engine is made, and has nice plates; and this is 'Robinson Crusoe,' which Parson Dale once said he would give me—I'd rather buy it out of my own money."

"Well, please yourself," quoth the tinker; "you shall have the books for four bob, and you can pay me next month."

"Four bobs, four shillings? it is a great sum," said Lenny; "but I will lay by, as you are kind enough to trust me: good-evening, Mr. Sprott."

"Stay a bit," said the tinker; "I'll just throw you these two little tracts into the bargain; they be only a shilling a dozen, so 't is but tuppence,—and ven you has read those, vy, you'll be a regular customer."

The tinker tossed to Lenny Nos. 1 and 2 of "Appeals to Operatives," and the peasant took them up gratefully.

The young knowledge-seeker went his way across the green fields, and under the still autumn foliage of the hedgerows. He looked first at one book, then at another; he did not know on which to settle.

The tinker rose, and made a fire with leaves and furze and sticks, some dry and some green.

Lenny has now opened No. 1 of the tracts: they are the shortest to read, and don't require so much effort of the mind as the explanation of the steam-engine.

The tinker has set on his grimy glue-pot, and the glue simmers.

CHAPTER VI.

As Violante became more familiar with her new home, and those around her became more familiar with Violante, she was remarked for a certain stateliness of manner and bearing, which, had it been less evidently natural and inborn, would have seemed misplaced in the daughter of a forlorn exile, and would have been rare at so early an age among children of the loftiest pretensions. It was with the air of a little princess that she presented her tiny hand to a friendly pressure, or submitted her calm clear cheek to a presuming kiss. Yet withal she was so graceful, and her very stateliness was so pretty and captivating, that she was not the less loved for all her grand airs. And, indeed, she deserved to be loved; for though she was certainly prouder than Mr. Dale could approve of, her pride was devoid of egotism,—and that is a pride by no means common. She had an intuitive forethought for others: you could see that she was capable of that grand woman-heroism, abnegation of self; and though she was an original child, and often grave and musing, with a tinge of melancholy, sweet, but deep in her character, still she was not above the happy genial merriment of childhood,—only her silver laugh was more attuned, and her gestures more composed, than those of children habituated to many play-fellows usually are. Mrs. Hazeldean liked her best when she was grave, and said "she would become a very sensible woman." Mrs. Dale liked her best when she was gay, and said "she was born to make many a heart ache;" for which Mrs. Dale was properly reproved by the parson. Mrs. Hazeldean gave her a little set of garden tools; Mrs. Dale a picture-book and a beautiful doll. For a long time the book and the doll had the preference. But Mrs. Hazeldean having observed to Riccabocca that the poor child looked pale, and ought to be a good deal in the open air, the wise father ingeniously pretended to Violante that Mrs. Riccabocca had taken a great fancy to the picture-book, and that he should be very glad to have the doll, upon which Violante hastened to give them both away, and was never so happy as when Mamma (as she called Mrs. Riccabocca) was admiring the picture-book, and Riccabocca with austere gravity dandled the doll. Then Riccabocca assured her that she could be of great use to him in the garden; and Violante instantly put into movement her spade, hoe, and wheelbarrow.

This last occupation brought her into immediate contact with Mr. Leonard Fairfield; and that personage one morning, to his great horror, found Miss Violante had nearly exterminated a whole celery-bed, which she had ignorantly conceived to be a crop of weeds.

Lenny was extremely angry. He snatched away the hoe, and said angrily, "You must not do that, Miss. I'll tell your papa if you—"

Violante drew herself up, and never having been so spoken to before, at least since her arrival in England, there was something comic in the surprise of her large eyes, as well as something tragic in the dignity of

her offended mien. "It is very naughty of you, Miss," continued Leonard, in a milder tone, for he was both softened by the eyes and awed by the mien, "and I trust you will not do it again."

"Non capisco," murmured Violante, and the dark eyes filled with tears. At that moment up came Jackeymo: and Violante, pointing to Leonard, said, with an effort not to betray her emotion, "Il fanciullo e molto grossolano."—"He is a very rude boy."]

Jackeymo turned to Leonard with the look of an enraged tiger. "How you dare, scum of de earth that you are," cried he, "how you dare make cry the signorina?" And his English not supplying familiar vituperatives sufficiently, he poured out upon Lenny such a profusion of Italian abuse, that the boy turned red and white, in a breath, with rage and perplexity.

Violante took instant compassion upon the victim she had made, and with true feminine caprice now began to scold Jackeymo for his anger, and, finally approaching Leonard, laid her hand on his arm, and said with a kindness at once childlike and queenly, and in the prettiest imaginable mixture of imperfect English and soft Italian, to which I cannot pretend to do justice, and shall therefore translate: "Don't mind him. I dare say it was all my fault, only I did not understand you: are not these things weeds?"

"No, my darling signorina," said Jackeymo in Italian, looking ruefully at the celery-bed, "they are not weeds, and they sell very well at this time of the year. But still, if it amuses you to pluck them up, I should like to see who's to prevent it."

Lenny walked away. He had been called "the scum of the earth,"—by a foreigner too! He had again been ill-treated for doing what he conceived his duty. He was again feeling the distinction between rich and poor, and he now fancied that that distinction involved deadly warfare, for he had read from beginning to end those two damnable tracts which the tinker had presented to him. But in the midst of all the angry disturbance of his mind, he felt the soft touch of the infant's hand, the soothing influence of her conciliating words, and he was half ashamed that he had spoken so roughly to a child.

Still, not trusting himself to speak, he walked away, and sat down at a distance: "I don't see," thought he, "why there should be rich and poor, master and servant." Lenny, be it remembered, had not heard the Parson's Political Sermon.

An hour after, having composed himself, Lenny returned to his work. Jackeymo was no longer in the garden: he had gone to the fields; but Riccabocca was standing by the celerybed, and holding the red silk umbrella over Violante as she sat on the ground, looking up at her father with those eyes already so full of intelligence and love and soul.

"Lenny," said Riccabocca, "my young lady has been telling me that she has been very naughty, and Giacomo very unjust to you. Forgive them both."

Lenny's sullenness melted in an instant: the reminiscences of tracts Nos. 1 and 2,—

"Like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Left not a wreck behind."

He raised eyes swimming with all his native goodness towards the wise man, and dropped them gratefully on the infant peace-maker. Then he turned away his head and fairly wept. The parson was right: "O ye poor, have charity for the rich; O ye rich, respect the poor."

CHAPTER VII.

Now from that day the humble Lenny and the regal Violante became great friends. With what pride he taught her to distinguish between celery and weeds,—and how proud too was she when she learned that she was useful! There is not a greater pleasure you can give children, especially female children, than to make them feel they are already of value in the world, and serviceable as well as protected. Weeks and months rolled away, and Lenny still read, not only the books lent him by the doctor, but those he bought of Mr. Sprott. As for the bombs and shells against religion which the tinker carried in his bag, Lenny was not induced to blow himself up with them. He had been reared from his cradle in simple love and reverence for the Divine Father, and the tender Saviour, whose life beyond all records of human goodness, whose death beyond all epics of mortal heroism, no being whose infancy has been taught to supplicate the Merciful and adore the Holy, yea, even though his later life may be entangled amidst the thorns of some desolate pyrrhonism, can ever hear reviled and scoffed without a shock to the conscience and a revolt of the heart. As the deer recoils by instinct from the tiger, as the very look of the scorpion deters you from handling it, though you never saw a scorpion before, so the very first line in some ribald profanity on which the tinker put his black finger made Lenny's blood run cold. Safe, too, was the peasant boy from any temptation in works of a gross and licentious nature, not only because of the happy ignorance of his rural life, but because of a more enduring safeguard,—genius! Genius, that, manly, robust, healthful as it be, is long before it lose its instinctive Dorian modesty; shamefaced, because so susceptible to glory,—genius, that loves indeed to dream, but on the violet bank, not the dunghill. Wherefore, even in the error of the senses, it seeks to escape from the sensual into worlds of fancy, subtle and refined. But apart from the passions, true genius is the most practical of all human gifts. Like the Apollo, whom the Greek worshipped as its type, even Arcady is its exile,

not its home. Soon weary of the dalliance of Tempe, it ascends to its mission,—the Archer of the silver bow, the guide of the car of light. Speaking more plainly, genius is the enthusiasm for self-improvement; it ceases or sleeps the moment it desists from seeking some object which it believes of value, and by that object it insensibly connects its self-improvement with the positive advance of the world. At present Lenny's genius had no bias that was not to the Positive and Useful. It took the direction natural to its sphere, and the wants therein,—namely, to the arts which we call mechanical. He wanted to know about steam-engines and Artesian wells; and to know about them it was necessary to know something of mechanics and hydrostatics; so he bought popular elementary works on those mystic sciences, and set all the powers of his mind at work on experiments.

Noble and generous spirits are ye, who, with small care for fame, and little reward from pelf, have opened to the intellects of the poor the portals of wisdom! I honour and revere ye; only do not think ye have done all that is needful. Consider, I pray ye, whether so good a choice from the tinker's bag would have been made by a boy whom religion had not scared from the Pestilent, and genius had not led to the self-improving. And Lenny did not wholly escape from the mephitic portions of the motley elements from which his awakening mind drew its nurture. Think not it was all pure oxygen that the panting lip drew in. No; there were still those inflammatory tracts. Political I do not like to call them, for politics means the art of government, and the tracts I speak of assailed all government which mankind has hitherto recognized. Sad rubbish, perhaps, were such tracts to you, O sound thinker, in your easy-chair! or to you, practised statesman, at your post on the Treasury Bench; to you, calm dignitary of a learned Church; or to you, my lord judge, who may often have sent from your bar to the dire Orcus of Norfolk's Isle the ghosts of men whom that rubbish, falling simultaneously on the bumps of acquisitiveness and combativeness, hath untimely slain! Sad rubbish to you! But seems it such rubbish to the poor man, to whom it promises a paradise on the easy terms of upsetting a world? For, ye see, those "Appeals to Operatives" represent that same world-upsetting as the simplest thing imaginable,—a sort of two-and-two-make-four proposition. The poor have only got to set their strong hands to the axle, and heave-a-boy! and hurrah for the topsy-turvy! Then just to put a little wholesome rage into the heave-a-hoy! it is so facile to accompany the eloquence of "Appeals" with a kind of stir-the-bile-up statistics,— "Abuses of the aristocracy," "Jobs of the Priesthood," "Expenses of the Army kept up for Peers' younger sons," "Wars contracted for the villanous purpose of raising the rents of the landowners,"—all arithmetically dished up, and seasoned with tales of every gentleman who has committed a misdeed, every clergyman who has dishonoured his cloth; as if such instances were fair specimens of average gentlemen and ministers of religion! All this, passionately advanced (and, observe, never answered, for that literature admits no controversialists, and the writer has it all his own way), may be rubbish; but it is out of such rubbish that operatives build barricades for attack, and legislators prisons for

defence.

Our poor friend Lenny drew plenty of this stuff from the tinker's bag. He thought it very clever and very eloquent; and he supposed the statistics were as true as mathematical demonstrations.

A famous knowledge-diffuser is looking over my shoulder, and tells me, "Increase education, and cheapen good books, and all this rubbish will disappear!" Sir, I don't believe a word of it. If you printed Ricardo and Adam Smith at a farthing a volume, I still believe that they would be as little read by the operatives as they are nowadays by a very large proportion of highly-cultivated men. I still believe that, while the press works, attacks on the rich and propositions for heave-a-hoys will always form a popular portion of the Literature of Labour. There's Lenny Fairfield reading a treatise on hydraulics, and constructing a model for a fountain into the bargain; but that does not prevent his acquiescence in any proposition for getting rid of a National Debt, which he certainly never agreed to pay, and which he is told makes sugar and tea so shamefully dear. No. I tell you what does a little counteract those eloquent incentives to break his own head against the strong walls of the Social System,—it is, that he has two eyes in that head which are not always employed in reading. And having been told in print that masters are tyrants, parsons hypocrites or drones in the hive, and landowners vampires and bloodsuckers, he looks out into the little world around him, and, first, he is compelled to acknowledge that his master is not a tyrant (perhaps because he is a foreigner and a philosopher, and, for what I and Lenny know, a republican). But then Parson Dale, though High Church to the marrow, is neither hypocrite nor drone. He has a very good living, it is true,—much better than he ought to have, according to the "political" opinions of those tracts! but Lenny is obliged to confess that if Parson Dale were a penny the poorer, he would do a pennyworth's less good; and comparing one parish with another, such as Rood Hall and Hazeldean, he is dimly aware that there is no greater CIVILIZER than a parson tolerably well off. Then, too, Squire Hazeldean, though as arrant a Tory as ever stood upon shoe-leather, is certainly not a vampire nor blood sucker. He does not feed on the public; a great many of the public feed upon him: and, therefore, his practical experience a little staggers and perplexes Lenny Fairfield as to the gospel accuracy of his theoretical dogmas. Masters, parsons, and landowners! having, at the risk of all popularity, just given a /coup de patte/ to certain sages extremely the fashion at present, I am not going to let you off without an admonitory flea in the ear. Don't suppose that any mere scribbling and typework will suffice to answer the scribbling and typework set at work to demolish you,—write down that rubbish you can't; live it down you may. If you are rich, like Squire Hazeldean, do good with your money; if you are poor, like Signor Riccabocca, do good with your kindness.

See! there is Lenny now receiving his week's wages; and though Lenny knows that he can get higher wages in the very next parish, his blue eyes

are sparkling with gratitude, not at the chink of the money, but at the poor exile's friendly talk on things apart from all service; while Violante is descending the steps from the terrace, charged by her mother-in-law with a little basket of sago, and such-like delicacies, for Mrs. Fairfield, who has been ailing the last few days.

Lenny will see the tinker as he goes home, and he will buy a most Demosthenean "Appeal,"—a tract of tracts, upon the propriety of Strikes and the Avarice of Masters. But, somehow or other, I think a few words from Signor Riccabocca, that did not cost the signor a farthing, and the sight of his mother's smile at the contents of the basket, which cost very little, will serve to neutralize the effects of that "Appeal" much more efficaciously than the best article a Brougham or a Mill could write on the subject.

CHAPTER VIII.

Spring had come again; and one beautiful May day, Leonard Fairfield sat beside the little fountain which he had now actually constructed in the garden. The butterflies were hovering over the belt of flowers which he had placed around his fountain, and the birds were singing overhead. Leonard Fairfield was resting from his day's work, to enjoy his abstemious dinner, beside the cool play of the sparkling waters, and, with the yet keener appetite of knowledge, he devoured his book as he munched his crusts.

A penny tract is the shoeing-horn of literature! it draws on a great many books, and some too tight to be very useful in walking. The penny tract quotes a celebrated writer—you long to read him; it props a startling assertion by a grave authority—you long to refer to it. During the nights of the past winter, Leonard's intelligence had made vast progress; he had taught himself more than the elements of mechanics, and put to practice the principles he had acquired not only in the hydraulical achievement of the fountain, nor in the still more notable application of science, commenced on the stream in which Jackeymo had fished for minnows, and which Lenny had diverted to the purpose of irrigating two fields, but in various ingenious contrivances for the facilitation or abridgment of labour, which had excited great wonder and praise in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, those rabid little tracts, which dealt so summarily with the destinies of the human race, even when his growing reason and the perusal of works more classical or more logical had led him to perceive that they were illiterate, and to suspect that they jumped from premises to conclusions with a celerity very different from the careful ratiocination of mechanical science, had still, in the citations and references wherewith they abounded, lured him on to philosophers more specious and more perilous. Out of the tinker's bag he

had drawn a translation of Condorcet's "Progress of Man" and another of Rousseau's "Social Contract." Works so eloquent had induced him to select from the tracts in the tinker's miscellany those which abounded most in professions of philanthropy, and predictions of some coming Golden Age, to which old Saturn's was a joke,—tracts so mild and mother-like in their language, that it required a much more practical experience than Lenny's to perceive that you would have to pass a river of blood before you had the slightest chance of setting foot on the flowery banks on which they invited you to repose; tracts which rouged poor Christianity on the cheeks, clapped a crown of innocent daffodillies on her head, and set her to dancing a /pas de zephyr/ in the pastoral ballet in which Saint-Simon pipes to the flock he shears; or having first laid it down as a preliminary axiom that—

"The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,—
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,"

substituted in place thereof M. Fourier's symmetrical phalanstere, or Mr. Owen's architectural parallelogram. It was with some such tract that Lenny was seasoning his crusts and his radishes, when Riccabocca, bending his long dark face over the student's shoulder, said abruptly,—

"/Diavolo/, my friend! what on earth have you got there? Just let me look at it, will you?"

Leonard rose respectfully, and coloured deeply as he surrendered the tract to Riccabocca.

The wise man read the first page attentively, the second more cursorily, and only ran his eye over the rest. He had gone through too vast a range of problems political, not to have passed over that venerable /Pons Asinorum/ of Socialism, on which Fouriers and Saint-Simons sit straddling, and cry aloud that they have arrived at the last boundary of knowledge!

"All this is as old as the hills," quoth Riccabocca, irreverently; "but the hills stand still, and this—there it goes!" and the sage pointed to a cloud emitted from his pipe. "Did you ever read Sir David Brewster on Optical Delusions? No! Well, I'll lend it to you. You will find therein a story of a lady who always saw a black cat on her hearth-rug. The black cat existed only in her fancy, but the hallucination was natural and reasonable,—eh, what do you think?"

"Why, sir," said Leonard, not catching the Italian's meaning, "I don't exactly see that it was natural and reasonable."

"Foolish boy, yes! because black cats are things possible and known. But who ever saw upon earth a community of men such as sit on the hearth-rugs of Messrs. Owen and Fourier? If the lady's hallucination was not

reasonable, what is his who believes in such visions as these?"

Leonard bit his lip.

"My dear boy," cried Riccabocca, kindly, "the only thing sure and tangible to which these writers would lead you lies at the first step, and that is what is commonly called a Revolution. Now, I know what that is. I have gone, not indeed through a revolution, but an attempt at one."

Leonard raised his eyes towards his master with a look of profound respect and great curiosity.

"Yes," added Riccabocca, and the face on which the boy gazed exchanged its usual grotesque and sardonic expression for one animated, noble, and heroic. "Yes, not a revolution for chimeras, but for that cause which the coldest allow to be good, and which, when successful, all time approves as divine,—the redemption of our native soil from the rule of the foreigner! I have shared in such an attempt. And," continued the Italian, mournfully, "recalling now all the evil passions it arouses, all the ties it dissolves, all the blood that it commands to flow, all the healthful industry it arrests, all the madmen that it arms, all the victims that it dupes, I question whether one man really honest, pure, and humane, who has once gone through such an ordeal, would ever hazard it again, unless he was assured that the victory was certain,—ay, and the object for which he fights not to be wrested from his hands amidst the uproar of the elements that the battle has released."

The Italian paused, shaded his brow with his hand, and remained long silent. Then, gradually resuming his ordinary tone, he continued,—

"Revolutions that have no definite objects made clear by the positive experience of history; revolutions, in a word, that aim less at substituting one law or one dynasty for another, than at changing the whole scheme of society, have been little attempted by real statesmen. Even Lycurgus is proved to be a myth who never existed. Such organic changes are but in the day-dreams of philosophers who lived apart from the actual world, and whose opinions (though generally they were very benevolent, good sort of men, and wrote in an elegant poetical style) one would no more take on a plain matter of life, than one would look upon Virgil's Eclogues as a faithful picture of the ordinary pains and pleasures of the peasants who tend our sheep. Read them as you would read poets, and they are delightful. But attempt to shape the world according to the poetry, and fit yourself for a madhouse. The farther off the age is from the realization of such projects, the more these poor philosophers have indulged them. Thus, it was amidst the saddest corruption of court manners that it became the fashion in Paris to sit for one's picture with a crook in one's hand, as Alexis or Daphne. Just as liberty was fast dying out of Greece, and the successors of Alexander were founding their monarchies, and Rome was growing up to crush in its

iron grasp all States save its own, Plato withdraws his eyes from the world, to open them in his dreamy "Atlantis." Just in the grimmest period of English history, with the axe hanging over his head, Sir Thomas More gives you his "Utopia." Just when the world is to be the theatre of a new Sesostris, the sages of France tell you that the age is too enlightened for war, that man is henceforth to be governed by pure reason, and live in a paradise. Very pretty reading all this to a man like me, Lenny, who can admire and smile at it. But to you, to the man who has to work for his living, to the man who thinks it would be so much more pleasant to live at his ease in a phalanstere than to work eight or ten hours a day; to the man of talent and action and industry, whose future is invested in that tranquillity and order of a State in which talent and action and industry are a certain capital,—why, Messrs. Coutts, the great bankers, had better encourage a theory to upset the system of banking! Whatever disturbs society, yea, even by a causeless panic, much more by an actual struggle, falls first upon the market of labour, and thence affects prejudicially every department of intelligence. In such times the arts are arrested; literature is neglected; people are too busy to read anything save appeals to their passions. And capital, shaken in its sense of security, no longer ventures boldly through the land, calling forth all the energies of toil and enterprise, and extending to every workman his reward. Now, Lenny, take this piece of advice. You are young, clever, and aspiring; men rarely succeed in changing the world; but a man seldom fails of success if he lets the world alone, and resolves to make the best of it. You are in the midst of the great crisis of your life; it is the struggle between the new desires knowledge excites, and that sense of poverty which those desires convert either into hope and emulation, or into envy and despair. I grant that it is an up-hill work that lies before you; but don't you think it is always easier to climb a mountain than it is to level it? These books call on you to level the mountain; and that mountain is the property of other people, subdivided amongst a great many proprietors, and protected by law. At the first stroke of the pickaxe, it is ten to one but what you are taken up for a trespass. But the path up the mountain is a right of way uncontested. You may be safe at the summit, before (even if the owners are fools enough to let you) you could have levelled a yard. Cospetto!" quoth the doctor, "it is more than two thousand years ago since poor Plato began to level it, and the mountain is as high as ever!"

Thus saying, Riccabocca came to the end of his pipe, and stalking thoughtfully away, he left Leonard Fairfield trying to extract light from the smoke.

CHAPTER IX.

Shortly after this discourse of Riccabocca's, an incident occurred to Leonard that served to carry his mind into new directions. One evening, when his mother was out, he was at work on a new mechanical contrivance, and had the misfortune to break one of the instruments which he employed. Now it will be remembered that his father had been the squire's head carpenter: the widow had carefully hoarded the tools of his craft, which had belonged to her poor Mark; and though she occasionally lent them to Leonard, she would not give them up to his service. Amongst these Leonard knew that he should find the one that he wanted; and being much interested in his contrivance, he could not wait till his mother's return. The tools, with other little relies of the lost, were kept in a large trunk in Mrs. Fairfield's sleepingroom; the trunk was not locked, and Leonard went to it with out ceremony or scruple. In rummaging for the instrument his eye fell upon a bundle of manuscripts; and he suddenly recollected that when he was a mere child, and before he much knew the difference between verse and prose, his mother had pointed to these manuscripts, and said, "One day or other, when you can read nicely, I'll let you look at these, Lenny. My poor Mark wrote such verses—ah, he was a schollard!" Leonard, reasonably enough, thought that the time had now arrived when he was worthy the privilege of reading the paternal effusions, and he took forth the manuscripts with a keen but melancholy interest. He recognized his father's handwriting, which he had often seen before in account-books and memoranda, and read eagerly some trifling poems, which did not show much genius, nor much mastery of language and rhythm,—such poems, in short, as a self-educated man, with poetic taste and feeling rather than poetic inspiration or artistic culture, might compose with credit, but not for fame. But suddenly, as he turned over these "Occasional Pieces," Leonard came to others in a different handwriting,—a woman's handwriting, small and fine and exquisitely formed. He had scarcely read six lines of these last, before his attention was irresistibly chained. They were of a different order of merit from poor Mark's; they bore the unmistakable stamp of genius. Like the poetry of women in general, they were devoted to personal feeling,—they were not the mirror of a world, but reflections of a solitary heart. Yet this is the kind of poetry most pleasing to the young. And the verses in question had another attraction for Leonard: they seemed to express some struggle akin to his own,—some complaint against the actual condition of the writer's life, some sweet melodious murmurs at fortune. For the rest, they were characterized by a vein of sentiment so elevated, that, if written by a man, it would have run into exaggeration; written by a woman, the romance was carried off by so many genuine revelations of sincere, deep, pathetic feeling, that it was always natural, though true to a nature for which you would not augur happiness.

Leonard was still absorbed in the perusal of these poems when Mrs.

Fairfield entered the room.

"What have you been about, Lenny,—searching in my box?"

"I came to look for my father's bag of tools, Mother, and I found these papers, which you said I might read some day."

"I does n't wonder you did not hear me when I came in," said the widow, sighing. "I used to sit still for the hour together, when my poor Mark read his poems to me. There was such a pretty one about the 'Peasant's Fireside,' Lenny,—have you got hold of that?"

"Yes, dear mother; and I remarked the allusion to you: it brought tears to my eyes. But these verses are not my father's; whose are they? They seem in a woman's handwriting."

Mrs. Fairfield looked, changed colour, grew faint and seated herself.

"Poor, poor Nora!" said she, falteringly. "I did not know as they were there; Mark kep' 'em; they got among his—"

LEONARD.—"Who was Nora?"

MRS. FAIRFIELD.—"Who?—child—who? Nora was—was my own—own sister."

LEONARD (in great amaze, contrasting his ideal of the writer of these musical lines, in that graceful hand, with his homely uneducated mother, who could neither read nor write).—"Your sister! is it possible! My aunt, then. How comes it you never spoke of her before? Oh, you should be so proud of her, Mother!"

MRS. FAIRFIELD (clasping her hands).—"We were proud of her, all of us,—father, mother, all! She was so beautiful and so good, and not proud she! though she looked like the first lady in the land. Oh, Nora, Nora!"

LEONARD (after a pause).—"But she must have been highly educated?"

MRS. FAIRFIELD.—"Deed she was!"

LEONARD.—"How was that?"

MRS. FAIRFIELD (rocking herself to and fro in her chair).—"Oh, my Lady was her godmother,—Lady Lansmere I mean,—and took a fancy to her when she was that high, and had her to stay at the Park, and wait on her Ladyship; and then she put her to school, and Nora was so clever that nothing would do but she must go to London as a governess. But don't talk of it, boy! don't talk of it!"

LEONARD.—"Why not, Mother? What has become of her; where is she?"

MRS. FAIRFIELD (bursting into a paroxysm of tears).—"In her grave,—in her cold grave! Dead, dead!"

Leonard was inexpressibly grieved and shocked. It is the attribute of the poet to seem always living, always a friend. Leonard felt as if some one very dear had been suddenly torn from his heart. He tried to console his mother; but her emotion was contagious, and he wept with her.

"And how long has she been dead?" he asked at last, in mournful accents.

"Many's the long year, many; but," added Mrs. Fairfield, rising, and putting her tremulous hand on Leonard's shoulder, "you'll just never talk to me about her; I can't bear it, it breaks my heart. I can bear better to talk of Mark; come downstairs,—come."

"May I not keep these verses, Mother? Do let me."

"Well, well, those bits o' paper be all she left behind her,—yes, keep them, but put back Mark's. Are they all here,—sure?" And the widow, though she could not read her husband's verses, looked jealously at the manuscripts written in his irregular, large scrawl, and, smoothing them carefully, replaced them in the trunk, and resettled over them some sprigs of lavender, which Leonard had unwittingly disturbed.

"But," said Leonard, as his eye again rested on the beautiful handwriting of his lost aunt,—"but you called her Nora—I see she signs herself L."

"Leonora was her name. I said she was my Lady's god-child. We call her Nora for short—"

"Leonora—and I am Leonard—is that how I came by the name?"

"Yes, yes; do hold your tongue, boy," sobbed poor Mrs. Fairfield; and she could not be soothed nor coaxed into continuing or renewing a subject which was evidently associated with insupportable pain.

CHAPTER X.

It is difficult to exaggerate the effect that this discovery produced on Leonard's train of thought. Some one belonging to his own humble race had, then, preceded him in his struggling flight towards the loftier regions of Intelligence and Desire. It was like the mariner amidst unknown seas, who finds carved upon some desert isle a familiar household name.

And this creature of genius and of sorrow—whose existence he had only

learned by her song, and whose death created, in the simple heart of her sister, so passionate a grief, after the lapse of so many years—supplied to the romance awaking in his young heart the ideal which it unconsciously sought. He was pleased to hear that she had been beautiful and good. He paused from his books to muse on her, and picture her image to his fancy. That there was some mystery in her fate was evident to him; and while that conviction deepened his interest, the mystery itself by degrees took a charm which he was not anxious to dispel. He resigned himself to Mrs. Fairfield's obstinate silence. He was contented to rank the dead amongst those holy and ineffable images which we do not seek to unveil. Youth and Fancy have many secret hoards of idea which they do not desire to impart, even to those most in their confidence. I doubt the depth of feeling in any man who has not certain recesses in his soul into which none may enter.

Hitherto, as I have said, the talents of Leonard Fairfield had been more turned to things positive than to the ideal,—to science and investigation of fact than to poetry, and that airier truth in which poetry has its element. He had read our greater poets, indeed, but without thought of imitating; and rather from the general curiosity to inspect all celebrated monuments of the human mind than from that especial predilection for verse which is too common in childhood and youth to be any sure sign of a poet. But now these melodies, unknown to all the world beside, rang in his ear, mingled with his thoughts,—set, as it were, his whole life to music. He read poetry with a different sentiment,—it seemed to him that he had discovered its secret. And so reading, the passion seized him, and "the numbers came."

To many minds, at the commencement of our grave and earnest pilgrimage, I am Vandal enough to think that the indulgence of poetic taste and reverie does great and lasting harm; that it serves to enervate the character, give false ideas of life, impart the semblance of drudgery to the noble toils and duties of the active man. All poetry would not do this,—not, for instance, the Classical, in its diviner masters; not the poetry of Homer, of Virgil, of Sophocles; not, perhaps, even that of the indolent Horace. But the poetry which youth usually loves and appreciates the best—the poetry of mere sentiment—does so in minds already over-predisposed to the sentimental, and which require bracing to grow into healthful manhood.

On the other hand, even this latter kind of poetry, which is peculiarly modern, does suit many minds of another mould,—minds which our modern life, with its hard positive forms, tends to produce. And as in certain climates plants and herbs, peculiarly adapted as antidotes to those diseases most prevalent in the atmosphere, are profusely sown, as it were, by the benignant providence of Nature, so it may be that the softer and more romantic species of poetry, which comes forth in harsh, money-making, unromantic times, is intended as curatives and counter-poisons. The world is so much with us, nowadays, that we need have something that prates to us, albeit even in too fine a euphuism, of the moon and stars.

Certes, to Leonard Fairfield, at that period of his intellectual life, the softness of our Helicon descended as healing dews. In his turbulent and unsettled ambition, in his vague grapple with the giant forms of political truths, in his bias towards the application of science to immediate practical purposes, this lovely vision of the Muse came in the white robe of the Peacemaker; and with upraised hand pointing to serene skies, she opened to him fair glimpses of the Beautiful, which is given to Peasant as to Prince,—showed to him that on the surface of earth there is something nobler than fortune, that he who can view the world as a poet is always at soul a king; while to practical purpose itself, that larger and more profound invention, which poetry stimulates, supplied the grand design and the subtle view,—leading him beyond the mere ingenuity of the mechanic, and habituating him to regard the inert force of the matter at his command with the ambition of the Discoverer. But, above all, the discontent that was within him finding a vent, not in deliberate war upon this actual world, but through the purifying channels of song, in the vent itself it evaporated, it was lost. By accustoming ourselves to survey all things with the spirit that retains and reproduces them only in their lovelier or grander aspects, a vast philosophy of toleration for what we before gazed on with scorn or hate insensibly grows upon us. Leonard looked into his heart after the Enchantress had breathed upon it; and through the mists of the fleeting and tender melancholy which betrayed where she had been, he beheld a new sun of delight and joy dawning over the landscape of human life.

Thus, though she was dead and gone from his actual knowledge, this mysterious kinswoman—"a voice, and nothing more"—had spoken to him, soothed, elevated, cheered, attuned each discord into harmony; and if now permitted from some serener sphere to behold the life that her soul thus strangely influenced, verily with yet holier joy the saving and lovely spirit might have glided onward in the Eternal Progress.

We call the large majority of human lives obscure. Presumptuous that we are! How know we what lives a single thought retained from the dust of nameless graves may have lighted to renown?

CHAPTER XI.

It was about a year after Leonard's discovery of the family manuscripts that Parson Dale borrowed the quietest pad-mare in the squire's stables, and set out on an equestrian excursion. He said that he was bound on business connected with his old parishioners of Lansmere; for, as it has been incidentally implied in a previous chapter, he had been connected with that borough town (and, I may here add, in the capacity of curate) before he had been inducted into the living of Hazeldean.

It was so rarely that the parson stirred from home, that this journey to a town more than twenty miles off was regarded as a most daring adventure, both at the Hall and at the Parsonage. Mrs. Dale could not sleep the whole previous night with thinking of it; and though she had naturally one of her worst nervous headaches on the eventful morn, she yet suffered no hands less thoughtful than her own to pack up the saddle-bags which the parson had borrowed along with the pad. Nay, so distrustful was she of the possibility of the good man's exerting the slightest common-sense in her absence, that she kept him close at her side while she was engaged in that same operation of packing-up,—showing him the exact spot in which the clean shirt was put; and how nicely the old slippers were packed up in one of his own sermons. She implored him not to mistake the sandwiches for his shaving-soap, and made him observe how carefully she had provided against such confusion, by placing them as far apart from each other as the nature of saddle-bags will admit. The poor parson—who was really by no means an absent man, but as little likely to shave himself with sandwiches and lunch upon soap as the most commonplace mortal may be—listened with conjugal patience, and thought that man never had such a wife before; nor was it without tears in his own eyes that he tore himself from the farewell embrace of his weeping Carry.

I confess, however, that it was with some apprehension that he set his foot in the stirrup, and trusted his person to the mercies of an unfamiliar animal. For, whatever might be Mr. Dale's minor accomplishments as man and parson, horsemanship was not his forte. Indeed, I doubt if he had taken the reins in his hand more than twice since he had been married.

The squire's surly old groom, Mat, was in attendance with the pad; and, to the parson's gentle inquiry whether Mat was quite sure that the pad was quite safe, replied laconically, "Oi, oi; give her her head."

"Give her her head!" repeated Mr. Dale, rather amazed, for he had not the slightest intention of taking away that part of the beast's frame, so essential to its vital economy,—"give her her head!"

"Oi, oi; and don't jerk her up like that, or she'll fall a doincing on her hind-legs."

The parson instantly slackened the reins; and Mrs. Dale—who had tarried behind to control her tears—now running to the door for "more last words," he waved his hand with courageous amenity, and ambled forth into the lane.

Our equestrian was absorbed at first in studying the idiosyncrasies of the pad-mare, and trying thereby to arrive at some notion of her general character: guessing, for instance, why she raised one ear and laid down the other; why she kept bearing so close to the left that she brushed his

leg against the hedge; and why, when she arrived at a little side-gate in the fields, which led towards the home-farm, she came to a full stop, and fell to rubbing her nose against the rail,—an occupation from which the parson, finding all civil remonstrances in vain, at length diverted her by a timorous application of the whip.

This crisis on the road fairly passed, the pad seemed to comprehend that she had a journey before her, and giving a petulant whisk of her tail, quickened her amble into a short trot, which soon brought the parson into the high road, and nearly opposite the Casino.

Here, sitting on the gate which led to his abode, and shaded by his umbrella, he beheld Dr. Riccabocca.

The Italian lifted his eyes from the book he was reading, and stared hard at the parson; and he—not venturing to withdraw his whole attention from the pad (who, indeed, set up both her ears at the apparition of Riccabocca, and evinced symptoms of that surprise and superstitious repugnance at unknown objects which goes by the name of "shying")—looked askance at Riccabocca.

"Don't stir, please," said the parson, "or I fear you'll alarm the creature; it seems a nervous, timid thing;—soho, gently, gently."

And he fell to patting the mare with great unction.

The pad, thus encouraged, overcame her first natural astonishment at the sight of Riccabocca and the red umbrella; and having before been at the Casino on sundry occasions, and sagaciously preferring places within the range of her experience to bourns neither cognate nor conjecturable, she moved gravely up towards the gate on which the Italian sat; and, after eying him a moment,—as much as to say, "I wish you would get off,"—came to a deadlock.

"Well," said Riccabocca, "since your horse seems more disposed to be polite to me than yourself, Mr. Dale, I take the opportunity of your present involuntary pause to congratulate you on your elevation in life, and to breathe a friendly prayer that pride may not have a fall!"

"Tut," said the parson, affecting an easy air, though still contemplating the pad, who appeared to have fallen into a quiet doze, "it is true that I have not ridden much of late years, and the squire's horses are very high-fed and spirited; but there is no more harm in them than their master when one once knows their ways."

"'Chi va piano va sano,
E chi va sano va lontano,'"

said Riccabocca, pointing to the saddle-bags. "You go slowly, therefore safely; and he who goes safely may go far. You seem prepared for a

journey?"

"I am," said the parson; "and on a matter that concerns you a little."

"Me!" exclaimed Riccabocca,—"concerns me!"

"Yes, so far as the chance of depriving you of a servant whom you like and esteem affects you."

"Oh," said Riccabocca, "I understand: you have hinted to me very often that I or Knowledge, or both together, have unfitted Leonard Fairfield for service."

"I did not say that exactly; I said that you have fitted him for something higher than service. But do not repeat this to him. And I cannot yet say more to you, for I am very doubtful as to the success of my mission; and it will not do to unsettle poor Leonard until we are sure that we can improve his condition."

"Of that you can never be sure," quoth the wise man, shaking his head; "and I can't say that I am unselfish enough not to bear you a grudge for seeking to decoy away from me an invaluable servant,—faithful, steady, intelligent, and (added Riccabocca, warming as he approached the climacteric adjective) "exceedingly cheap! Nevertheless go, and Heaven speed you. I am not an Alexander, to stand between man and the sun."

"You are a noble, great-hearted creature, Signor Riccabocca, in spite of your cold-blooded proverbs and villanous books." The parson, as he said this, brought down the whiphand with so indiscreet an enthusiasm on the pad's shoulder, that the poor beast, startled out of her innocent doze, made a bolt forward, which nearly precipitated Riccabocca from his seat on the stile, and then turning round—as the parson tugged desperately at the rein—caught the bit between her teeth, and set off at a canter. The parson lost both his stirrups; and when he regained them (as the pad slackened her pace), and had time to breathe and look about him, Riccabocca and the Casino were both out of sight.

"Certainly," quoth Parson Dale, as he resettled himself with great complacency, and a conscious triumph that he was still on the pad's back,— "certainly it is true 'that the noblest conquest ever made by man was that of the horse:' a fine creature it is,—a very fine creature,—and uncommonly difficult to sit on, especially without stirrups." Firmly in his stirrups the parson planted his feet; and the heart within him was very proud.

CHAPTER XII.

The borough town of Lansmere was situated in the county adjoining that which contained the village of Hazeldean. Late at noon the parson crossed the little stream which divided the two shires, and came to an inn, which was placed at an angle, where the great main road branched off into two directions, the one leading towards Lansmere, the other going more direct to London. At this inn the pad stopped, and put down both ears with the air of a pad who has made up her mind to bait. And the parson himself, feeling very warm and somewhat sore, said to the pad, benignly, "It is just,—thou shalt have corn and water!"

Dismounting, therefore, and finding himself very stiff as soon as he reached /terra firma/, the parson consigned the pad to the hostler, and walked into the sanded parlour of the inn, to repose himself on a very hard Windsor chair.

He had been alone rather more than half-an-hour, reading a county newspaper which smelled much of tobacco, and trying to keep off the flies that gathered round him in swarms, as if they had never before seen a parson, and were anxious to ascertain how the flesh of him tasted,—when a stagecoach stopped at the inn. A traveller got out with his carpetbag in his hand, and was shown into the sanded parlour.

The parson rose politely, and made a bow.

The traveller touched his hat, without taking it off, looked at Mr. Dale from top to toe, then walked to the window, and whistled a lively, impatient tune, then strode towards the fireplace and rang the bell; then stared again at the parson; and that gentleman having courteously laid down the newspaper, the traveller seized it, threw himself into a chair, flung one of his legs over the table, tossed the other up on the mantelpiece, and began reading the paper, while he tilted the chair on its hind-legs with so daring a disregard to the ordinary position of chairs and their occupants, that the shuddering parson expected every moment to see him come down on the back of his skull.

Moved, therefore, to compassion, Mr. Dale said mildly,—"Those chairs are very treacherous, sir. I'm afraid you'll be down."

"Eh," said the traveller, looking up much astonished. "Eh, down?—oh, you're satirical, sir."

"Satirical, sir? upon my word, no!" exclaimed the parson, earnestly.

"I think every freeborn man has a right to sit as he pleases in his own house," resumed the traveller, with warmth; "and an inn is his own house, I guess, so long as he pays his score. Betty, my dear."

For the chambermaid had now replied to the bell. "I han't Betty, sir; do you want she?"

"No, Sally; cold brandy and water—and a biscuit."

"I han't Sally, either," muttered the chambermaid; but the traveller, turning round, showed so smart a neckcloth and so comely a face, that she smiled, coloured, and went her way.

The traveller now rose, and flung down the paper. He took out a penknife, and began paring his nails. Suddenly desisting from this elegant occupation, his eye caught sight of the parson's shovel-hat, which lay on a chair in the corner.

"You're a clergyman, I reckon, sir," said the traveller, with a slight sneer.

Again Mr. Dale bowed,—bowed in part deprecatingly, in part with dignity. It was a bow that said, "No offence, sir, but I am a clergyman, and I'm not ashamed of it."

"Going far?" asked the traveller.

PARSON.—"Not very."

TRAVELLER.—"In a chaise or fly? If so, and we are going the same way, halves."

PARSON.—"Halves?"

TRAVELLER.—"Yes, I'll pay half the damage, pikes inclusive."

PARSON.—"You are very good, sir. But" (spoken with pride) "I am on horseback."

TRAVELLER.—"On horseback! Well, I should not have guessed that! You don't look like it. Where did you say you were going?"

"I did not say where I was going, sir," said the parson, dryly, for he was much offended at that vague and ungrammatical remark applicable to his horsemanship, that "he did not look like it."

"Close!" said the traveller, laughing; "an old traveller, I reckon."

The parson made no reply, but he took up his shovel-hat, and, with a bow more majestic than the previous one, walked out to see if his pad had finished her corn.

The animal had indeed finished all the corn afforded to her, which was not much, and in a few minutes more Mr. Dale resumed his journey. He had performed about three miles, when the sound of wheels behind him made him turn his head; and he perceived a chaise driven very fast, while out of the windows thereof dangled strangely a pair of human legs. The pad began to curvet as the post-horses rattled behind, and the parson had only an indistinct vision of a human face supplanting those human legs. The traveller peered out at him as he whirled by,—saw Mr. Dale tossed up and down on the saddle, and cried out, "How's the leather?"

"Leather!" soliloquized the parson, as the pad recomposed herself, "what does he mean by that? Leather! a very vulgar man. But I got rid of him cleverly."

Mr. Dale arrived without further adventure at Lansmere. He put up at the principal inn, refreshed himself by a general ablution, and sat down with good appetite to his beefsteak and pint of port.

The parson was a better judge of the physiognomy of man than that of the horse; and after a satisfactory glance at the civil smirking landlord, who removed the cover and set on the wine, he ventured on an attempt at conversation. "Is my Lord at the Park?"

LANDLORD (still more civilly than before).—"No, sir, his Lordship and my Lady have gone to town to meet Lord L'Estrange!"

"Lord L'Estrange! He is in England, then?"

"Why, so I heard," replied the landlord, "but we never see him here now. I remember him a very pretty young man. Every one was fond of him and proud of him. But what pranks he did play when he was a lad! We hoped he would come in for our boro' some of these days, but he has taken to foren parts,—more 's the pity. I am a reg'lar Blue, sir, as I ought to be. The Blue candidate always does me the honour to come to the Lansmere Arms. 'T is only the low party puts up with the Boar," added the landlord, with a look of ineffable disgust. "I hope you like the wine, sir?"

"Very good, and seems old."

"Bottled these eighteen years, sir. I had in the cask for the great election of Dashmore and Egerton. I have little left of it, and I never give it but to old friends like,—for, I think, Sir, though you be grown stout, and look more grand, I may say that I've had the pleasure of seeing you before."

"That's true, I dare say, though I fear I was never a very good customer."

"Ah, it is Mr. Dale, then! I thought so when you came into the hall."

I hope your lady is quite well, and the squire too; fine pleasant-spoken gentleman; no fault of his if Mr. Egerton went wrong. Well, we have never seen him—I mean Mr. Egerton—since that time. I don't wonder he stays away; but my Lord's son, who was brought up here, it an't nat'ral like that he should turn his back on us!"

Mr. Dale made no reply, and the landlord was about to retire, when the parson, pouring out another glass of the port, said, "There must be great changes in the parish. Is Mr. Morgan, the medical man, still here?"

"No, indeed! he took out his 'ploma after you left, and became a real doctor; and a pretty practice he had too, when he took, all of a sudden, to some new-fangled way of physicking,—I think they calls it homy-something."

"Homoeopathy?"

"That's it; something against all reason: and so he lost his practice here and went up to Lunnun. I've not heard of him since."

"Do the Avenels still reside in their old house?"

"Oh, yes!—and are pretty well off, I hear say. John is always poorly, though he still goes now and then to the Odd Fellows, and takes his glass; but his wife comes and fetches him away before he can do himself any harm."

"Mrs. Avenel is the same as ever?"

"She holds her head higher, I think," said the landlord, smiling. "She was always—not exactly proud like, but what I calls Bumptious."

"I never heard that word before," said the parson, laying down his knife and fork. "Bumptious indeed, though I believe it is not in the dictionary, has crept into familiar parlance, especially amongst young folks at school and college."

"Bumptious is bumptious, and gumptious is Bumptious," said the landlord, delighted to puzzle a parson. "Now the town beadle is bumptious, and Mrs. Avenel is Bumptious."

"She is a very respectable woman," said Mr. Dale, somewhat rebukingly.

"In course, sir, all gumptious folks are; they value themselves on their respectability, and looks down on their neighbours."

PARSON (still philologically occupied).—"Gumptious—gumptious. I think I remember the substantive at school,—not that my master taught it to me. 'Gumption'—it means cleverness."

LANDLORD (doggedly).—"There's gumption and Bumptious! Gumption is knowing; but when I say that sum 'un is gumptious, I mean—though that's more vulgar like—sum 'un who does not think small beer of hisself. You take me, sir?"

"I think I do," said the parson, half smiling. "I believe the Avenels have only two of their children alive still,—their daughter who married Mark Fairfield, and a son who went off to America?"

"Ah, but he made his fortune there and has come back."

"Indeed! I'm very glad to hear it. He has settled at Lansmere?"

"No, Sir. I hear as he's bought a property a long way off. But he comes to see his parents pretty often—so John tells me—but I can't say that I ever see him. I fancy Dick does n't like to be seen by folks who remember him playing in the kennel."

"Not unnatural," said the parson, indulgently; "but he visits his parents; he is a good son at all events, then?"

"I've nothing to say against him. Dick was a wild chap before he took himself off. I never thought he would make his fortune; but the Avenels are a clever set. Do you remember poor Nora—the Rose of Lansmere, as they called her? Ah, no, I think she went up to Lunnun afore your time, sir."

"Humph!" said the parson, dryly. "Well, I think you may take away now. It will be dark soon, and I'll just stroll out and look about me."

"There's a nice tart coming, sir."

"Thank you, I've dined."

The parson put on his hat and sallied forth into the streets. He eyed the houses on either hand with that melancholy and wistful interest with which, in middle life, men revisit scenes familiar to them in youth,—surprised to find either so little change or so much, and recalling, by fits and snatches, old associations and past emotions. The long High Street which he threaded now began to change its bustling character, and slide, as it were gradually, into the high road of a suburb. On the left, the houses gave way to the moss-grown pales of Lansmere Park; to the right, though houses still remained, they were separated from each other by gardens, and took the pleasing appearance of villas,—such villas as retired tradesmen or their widows, old maids, and half-pay officers select for the evening of their days.

Mr. Dale looked at these villas with the deliberate attention of a man awakening his power of memory, and at last stopped before one, almost the last on the road, and which faced the broad patch of sward that lay

before the lodge of Lansmere Park. An old pollard-oak stood near it, and from the oak there came a low discordant sound; it was the hungry cry of young ravens, awaiting the belated return of the parent bird! Mr. Dale put his hand to his brow, paused a moment, and then, with a hurried step, passed through the little garden, and knocked at the door. A light was burning in the parlour, and Mr. Dale's eye caught through the window a vague outline of three forms. There was an evident bustle within at the sound of the knock. One of the forms rose and disappeared. A very prim, neat, middle-aged maid-servant now appeared at the threshold, and austere inquired the visitor's business.

"I want to see Mr. or Mrs. Avenel. Say that I have come many miles to see them; and take in this card."

The maid-servant took the card, and half closed the door. At least three minutes elapsed before she reappeared.

"Missis says it's late, sir; but walk in."

The parson accepted the not very gracious invitation, stepped across the little hall, and entered the parlour.

Old John Avenel, a mild-looking man, who seemed slightly paralytic, rose slowly from his armchair. Mrs. Avenel, in an awfully stiff, clean, Calvinistical cap, and a gray dress, every fold of which bespoke respectability and staid repute, stood erect on the floor, and fixing on the parson a cold and cautious eye, said,—

"You do the like of us great honour, Mr. Dale; take a chair. You call upon business?"

"Of which I apprised Mr. Avenel by letter."

"My husband is very poorly."

"A poor creature!" said John, feebly, and as if in compassion of himself. "I can't get about as I used to do. But it ben't near election time, be it, sir?"

"No, John," said Mrs. Avenel, placing her husband's arm within her own. "You must lie down a bit, while I talk to the gentleman."

"I'm a real good Blue," said poor John; "but I ain't quite the man I was;" and leaning heavily on his wife, he left the room, turning round at the threshold, and saying, with great urbanity, "Anything to oblige, sir!"

Mr. Dale was much touched. He had remembered John Avenel the comeliest, the most active, and the most cheerful man in Lansmere; great at glee

club and cricket (though then somewhat stricken in years), greater in vestries; reputed greatest in elections.

"Last scene of all," murmured the parson; "and oh, well, turning from the poet, may we cry with the disbelieving philosopher, 'Poor, poor humanity!'"

In a few minutes Mrs. Avenel returned. She took a chair at some distance from the parson's, and resting one hand on the elbow of the chair, while with the other she stiffly smoothed the stiff gown, she said,—

"Now, sir."

That "Now, sir," had in its sound something sinister and warlike. This the shrewd parson recognized with his usual tact. He edged his chair nearer to Mrs. Avenel, and placing his hand on hers,—

"Yes, now then, and as friend to friend."

CHAPTER XIII.

Mr. Dale had been more than a quarter of an hour conversing with Mrs. Avenel, and had seemingly made little progress in the object of his diplomatic mission, for now, slowly drawing on his gloves, he said,—

"I grieve to think, Mrs. Avenel, that you should have so hardened your heart—yes, you must pardon me,—it is my vocation to speak stern truths. You cannot say that I have not kept faith with you, but I must now invite you to remember that I specially reserved to myself the right of exercising a discretion to act as I judged best for the child's interest on any future occasion; and it was upon this understanding that you gave me the promise, which you would now evade, of providing for him when he came to manhood."

"I say I will provide for him. I say that you may 'prentice him in any distant town, and by and by we will stock a shop for him. What would you have more, sir, from folks like us, who have kept shop ourselves? It ain't reasonable what you ask, sir."

"My dear friend," said the parson, "what I ask of you at present is but to see him, to receive him kindly, to listen to his conversation, to judge for yourselves. We can have but a common object,—that your grandson should succeed in life, and do you credit. Now, I doubt very much whether we can effect this by making him a small shopkeeper."

"And has Jane Fairfield, who married a common carpenter, brought him up

to despise small shopkeepers?" exclaimed Mrs. Avenel, angrily.

"Heaven forbid! Some of the first men in England have been the sons of small shopkeepers. But is it a crime in them, or in their parents, if their talents have lifted them into such rank or renown as the haughtiest duke might envy? England were not England if a man must rest where his father began."

"Good!" said, or rather grunted, an approving voice, but neither Mrs. Avenel nor the parson heard it.

"All very fine," said Mrs. Avenel, bluntly. "But to send a boy like that to the University—where's the money to come from?"

"My dear Mrs. Avenel," said the parson, coaxingly, "the cost need not be great at a small college at Cambridge; and if you will pay half the expense, I will pay the other half. I have no children of my own, and can afford it."

"That's very handsome in you, sir," said Mrs. Avenel, somewhat touched, yet still not graciously. "But the money is not the only point."

"Once at Cambridge," continued Mr. Dale, speaking rapidly, "at Cambridge, where the studies are mathematical,—that is, of a nature for which he has shown so great an aptitude,—and I have no doubt he will distinguish himself; if he does, he will obtain, on leaving, what is called a fellowship,—that is, a collegiate dignity accompanied by an income on which he could maintain himself until he made his way in life. Come, Mrs. Avenel, you are well off; you have no relations nearer to you in want of your aid. Your son, I hear, has been very fortunate."

"Sir," said Mrs. Avenel, interrupting the parson, "it is not because my son Richard is an honour to us, and is a good son, and has made his fortune, that we are to rob him of what we have to leave, and give it to a boy whom we know nothing about, and who, in spite of what you say, can't bring upon us any credit at all."

"Why? I don't see that."

"Why!" exclaimed Mrs. Avenel, fiercely,— "why! you, know why. No, I don't want him to rise in life: I don't want folks to be speiring and asking about him. I think it is a very wicked thing to have put fine notions in his head, and I am sure my daughter Fairfield could not have done it herself. And now, to ask me to rob Richard, and bring out a great boy—who's been a gardener or ploughman, or suchlike—to disgrace a gentleman who keeps his carriage, as my son Richard does—I would have you to know, sir. No! I won't do it, and there's an end of the matter."

During the last two or three minutes, and just before that approving "good" had responded to the parson's popular sentiment, a door

communicating with an inner room had been gently opened, and stood ajar; but this incident neither party had even noticed. But now the door was thrown boldly open, and the traveller whom the parson had met at the inn walked up to Mr. Dale, and said, "No! that's not the end of the matter. You say the boy's a 'cute, clever lad?"

"Richard, have you been listening?" exclaimed Mrs. Avenel.

"Well, I guess, yes,—the last few minutes."

"And what have you heard?"

"Why, that this reverend gentleman thinks so highly of my sister Fairfield's boy that he offers to pay half of his keep at college. Sir, I'm very much obliged to you, and there's my hand if you'll take it."

The parson jumped up, overjoyed, and, with a triumphant glance towards Mrs. Avenel, shook hands heartily with Mr. Richard.

"Now," said the latter, "just put on your hat, sir, and take a stroll with me, and we'll discuss the thing businesslike. Women don't understand business: never talk to women on business."

With these words, Mr. Richard drew out a cigar-case, selected a cigar, which he applied to the candle, and walked into the hall.

Mrs. Avenel caught hold of the parson. "Sir, you'll be on your guard with Richard. Remember your promise."

"He does not know all, then?"

"He? No! And you see he did not overhear more than what he says. I'm sure you're a gentleman, and won't go against your word."

"My word was conditional; but I will promise you never to break the silence without more reason than I think there is here for it. Indeed, Mr. Richard Avenel seems to save all necessity for that."

"Are you coming, sir?" cried Richard, as he opened the street-door.

CHAPTER XIV.

The parson joined Mr. Richard Avenel on the road. It was a fine night, and the moon clear and shining.

"So, then," said Mr. Richard, thoughtfully, "poor Jane, who was always

the drudge of the family, has contrived to bring up her son well; and the boy is really what you say, eh,—could make a figure at college?”

”I am sure of it,” said the parson, hooking himself on to the arm which Mr. Avenel proffered.

”I should like to see him,” said Richard. ”Has he any manner? Is he genteel, or a mere country lout?”

”Indeed, he speaks with so much propriety, and has so much modest dignity about him, that there’s many a rich gentleman who would be proud of such a son.”

”It is odd,” observed Richard, ”what a difference there is in families. There’s Jane, now, who can’t read nor write, and was just fit to be a workman’s wife, had not a thought above her station; and when I think of my poor sister Nora—you would not believe it, sir, but she was the most elegant creature in the world,—yes, even as a child (she was but a child when I went off to America). And often, as I was getting on in life, often I used to say to myself, ’My little Nora shall be a lady after all.’ Poor thing—but she died young.” Richard’s voice grew husky.

The parson kindly pressed the arm on which he leaned, and said, after a pause,—

”Nothing refines us like education, sir. I believe your sister Nora had received much instruction, and had the talents to profit by it: it is the same with your nephew.”

”I’ll see him,” said Richard, stamping his foot firmly on the ground, ”and if I like him, I’ll be as good as a father to him. Look you, Mr.—what’s your name, sir?”

”Dale.”

”Mr. Dale, look you, I’m a single man. Perhaps I may marry some day; perhaps I sha’ n’t. I’m not going to throw myself away. If I can get a lady of quality, why—but that’s neither here nor there; meanwhile I should be glad of a nephew whom I need not be ashamed of. You see, sir, I am a new man, the builder of my own fortunes; and though I have picked up a little education—I don’t well know how,—as I scramble on still, now I come back to the old country, I’m well aware that I ’m not exactly a match for those d—d aristocrats; don’t show so well in a drawing-room as I could wish. I could be a parliament man if I liked, but I might make a goose of myself; so, all things considered, if I can get a sort of junior partner to do the polite work, and show off the goods, I think the house of Avenel & Co. might become a pretty considerable honour to the Britishers. You understand me, sir?”

"Oh, very well," answered Mr. Dale, smiling, though rather gravely.

"Now," continued the New Man, I'm not ashamed to have risen in life by my own merits; and I don't disguise what I've been. And, when I'm in my own grand house, I'm fond of saying, 'I landed at New York with L10 in my purse, and here I am!' But it would not do to have the old folks with me. People take you with all your faults if you're rich; but they won't swallow your family into the bargain. So if I don't have at my house my own father and mother, whom I love dearly, and should like to see sitting at table, with my servants behind their chairs, I could still less have sister Jane. I recollect her very well, but she can't have got genteeler as she's grown older. Therefore I beg you'll not set her on coming after me! it would not do by any manner of means. Don't say a word about me to her. But send the boy down here to his grandfather, and I'll see him quietly, you understand."

"Yes, but it will be hard to separate her from the boy."

"Stuff! all boys are separated from their parents when they go into the world. So that's settled. Now, just tell me. I know the old folks always snubbed Jane,—that is, Mother did. My poor dear father never snubbed any of us. Perhaps Mother has not behaved altogether well to Jane. But we must not blame her for that; you see this is how it happened. There were a good many of us, while Father and Mother kept shop in the High Street, so we were all to be provided for anyhow; and Jane, being very useful and handy at work, got a place when she was a little girl, and had no time for learning. Afterwards my father made a lucky hit, in getting my Lord Lansmere's custom after an election, in which he did a great deal for the Blues (for he was a famous electioneerer, my poor father). My Lady stood godmother to Nora; and then all my brothers, and two of my sisters, died off, and Father retired from business; and when he took Jane from service, she was so common-like that Mother could not help contrasting her with Nora. You see Jane was their child when they were poor little shop-people, with their heads scarce above water; and Nora was their child when they were well off, and had retired from trade, and lived genteel: so that makes a great difference. And Mother did not quite look on her as on her own child. But it was Jane's own fault: for Mother would have made it up with her if she had married the son of our neighbour the great linen-draper, as she might have done; but she would take Mark Fairfield, a common carpenter. Parents like best those of their children who succeed best in life. Natural. Why, they did not care for me till I came back the man I am. But to return to Jane: I'm afraid they've neglected her. How is she off?"

"She earns her livelihood, and is poor, but contented."

"Ah, just be good enough to give her this" (and Richard took a bank-note of L50 from his pocket-book).

"You can say the old folks sent it to her; or that it is a present from Dick, without telling her he has come back from America."

"My dear sir," said the parson, "I am more and more thankful to have made your acquaintance. This is a very liberal gift of yours; but your best plan will be to send it through your mother. For, though I don't want to betray any confidence you place in me, I should not know what to answer if Mrs. Fairfield began to question me about her brother. I never had but one secret to keep, and I hope I shall never have another. A secret is very like a lie!"

"You had a secret then?" said Richard, as he took back the bank-note. He had learned, perhaps in America, to be a very inquisitive man. He added point-blank, "Pray, what was it?"

"Why, what it would not be if I told you," said the parson, with a forced laugh,— "a secret!"

"Well, I guess we're in a land of liberty. Do as you like. Now, I dare say you think me a very odd fellow to come out of my shell to you in this off-hand way; but I liked the look of you, even when we were at the inn together. And just now I was uncommonly pleased to find that, though you are a parson, you don't want to keep a man's nose down to a shopboard, if he has anything in him. You're not one of the aristocrats—"

"Indeed," said the parson, with imprudent warmth, "it is not the character of the aristocracy of this country to keep people down. They make way amongst themselves for any man, whatever his birth, who has the talent and energy to aspire to their level. That's the especial boast of the British constitution, sir!"

"Oh, you think so, do you?" said Mr. Richard, looking sourly at the parson. "I dare say those are the opinions in which you have brought up the lad. Just keep him yourself and let the aristocracy provide for him!"

The parson's generous and patriotic warmth evaporated at once, at this sudden inlet of cold air into the conversation. He perceived that he had made a terrible blunder; and as it was not his business at that moment to vindicate the British constitution, but to serve Leonard Fairfield, he abandoned the cause of the aristocracy with the most poltroon and scandalous abruptness. Catching at the arm which Mr. Avenel had withdrawn from him, he exclaimed,—

"Indeed, sir, you are mistaken; I have never attempted to influence your nephew's political opinions. On the contrary, if, at his age, he can be said to have formed any opinions, I am greatly afraid—that is, I think his opinions are by no means sound—that is, constitutional. I mean, I mean—" And the poor parson, anxious to select a word that would not

offend his listener, stopped short in lamentable confusion of idea.

Mr. Avenel enjoyed his distress for a moment, with a saturnine smile, and then said,—

”Well, I calculate he’s a Radical. Natural enough, if he has not got a sixpence to lose—all come right by and by. I’m not a Radical,—at least not a Destructive—much too clever a man for that, I hope. But I wish to see things very different from what they are. Don’t fancy that I want the common people, who’ve got nothing, to pretend to dictate to their betters, because I hate to see a parcel of fellows who are called lords and squires trying to rule the roast. I think, sir, that it is men like me who ought to be at the top of the tree! and that’s the long and the short of it. What do you say?”

”I’ve not the least objection,” said the crestfallen parson, basely. But, to do him justice, I must add that he did not the least know what he was saying!

CHAPTER XV.

Unconscious of the change in his fate which the diplomacy of the parson sought to effect, Leonard Fairfield was enjoying the first virgin sweetness of fame; for the principal town in his neighbourhood had followed the then growing fashion of the age, and set up a Mechanics’ Institute, and some worthy persons interested in the formation of that provincial Athenaeum had offered a prize for the best Essay on the Diffusion of Knowledge,—a very trite subject, on which persons seem to think they can never say too much, and on which there is, nevertheless, a great deal yet to be said. This prize Leonard Fairfield had recently won. His Essay had been publicly complimented by a full meeting of the Institute; it had been printed at the expense of the Society, and had been rewarded by a silver medal,—delineative of Apollo crowning Merit (poor Merit had not a rag to his back; but Merit, left only to the care of Apollo, never is too good a customer to the tailor!) And the County Gazette had declared that Britain had produced another prodigy in the person of Dr. Riccabocca’s self-educated gardener.

Attention was now directed to Leonard’s mechanical contrivances. The squire, ever eagerly bent on improvements, had brought an engineer to inspect the lad’s system of irrigation, and the engineer had been greatly struck by the simple means by which a very considerable technical difficulty had been overcome. The neighbouring farmers now called Leonard ”Mr. Fairfield,” and invited him on equal terms to their houses. Mr. Stirn had met him on the high road, touched his hat, and hoped that ”he bore no malice.” All this, I say, was the first sweetness of fame;

and if Leonard Fairfield comes to be a great man, he will never find such sweets in the after fruit. It was this success which had determined the parson on the step which he had just taken, and which he had long before anxiously meditated. For, during the last year or so, he had renewed his old intimacy with the widow and the boy; and he had noticed, with great hope and great fear, the rapid growth of an intellect, which now stood out from the lowly circumstances that surrounded it in bold and unharmonizing relief.

It was the evening after his return home that the parson strolled up to the Casino. He put Leonard Fairfield's Prize Essay in his pocket; for he felt that he could not let the young man go forth into the world without a preparatory lecture, and he intended to scourge poor Merit with the very laurel wreath which it had received from Apollo. But in this he wanted Riccabocca's assistance; or rather he feared that, if he did not get the philosopher on his side, the philosopher might undo all the work of the parson.

CHAPTER XVI.

A sweet sound came through the orange boughs, and floated to the ears of the parson, as he wound slowly up the gentle ascent,—so sweet, so silvery, he paused in delight—unaware, wretched man! that he was thereby conniving at Papistical errors. Soft it came and sweet; softer and sweeter,—“Ave Maria!” Violante was chanting the evening hymn to the Virgin Mother. The parson at last distinguished the sense of the words, and shook his head with the pious shake of an orthodox Protestant. He broke from the spell resolutely, and walked on with a sturdy step. Gaining the terrace, he found the little family seated under an awning,—Mrs. Riccabocca knitting; the signor with his arms folded on his breast: the book he had been reading a few moments before had fallen on the ground, and his dark eyes were soft and dreamy. Violante had finished her hymn, and seated herself on the ground between the two, pillowing her head on her stepmother's lap, but with her hand resting on her father's knee, and her gaze fixed fondly on his face.

“Good-evening,” said Mr. Dale. Violante stole up to him, and, pulling him so as to bring his ear nearer to her lip, whispered, “Talk to Papa, do,—and cheerfully; he is sad.”

She escaped from him as she said this, and appeared to busy herself with watering the flowers arranged on stands round the awning. But she kept her swimming lustrous eyes wistfully on her father.

“How fares it with you, my dear friend?” said the parson, kindly, as he rested his hand on the Italian's shoulder. “You must not let him get out

of spirits, Mrs. Riccabocca.”

”I am very ungrateful to her if I ever am so,” said the poor Italian, with all his natural gallantry. Many a good wife, who thinks it is a reproach to her if her husband is ever ”out of spirits,” might have turned peevishly from that speech, more elegant than sincere, and so have made bad worse; but Mrs. Riccabocca took her husband’s proffered hand affectionately, and said with great /naivete/,-

”You see I am so stupid, Mr. Dale; I never knew I was so stupid till I married. But I am very glad you are come. You can get on some learned subject together, and then he will not miss so much his-”

”His what?” asked Riccabocca, inquisitively.

”His country. Do you think that I cannot sometimes read your thoughts?”

”Very often. But you did not read them just then. The tongue touches where the tooth aches, but the best dentist cannot guess at the tooth unless one open one’s mouth.-Basta! Can we offer you some wine of our own making, Mr. Dale?-it is pure.”

”I ’d rather have some tea,” quoth the parson, hastily. Mrs. Riccabocca, too pleased to be in her natural element of domestic use, hurried into the house to prepare our national beverage. And the parson, sliding into her chair, said,-

”But you are dejected then? Fie! If there’s a virtue in the world at which we should always aim, it is cheerfulness.”

”I don’t dispute it,” said Riccabocca, with a heavy sigh. ”But though it is said by some Greek, who, I think, is quoted by your favourite Seneca, that a wise man carries his country with him at the soles of his feet, he can’t carry also the sunshine over his head.”

”I tell you what it is,” said the parson, bluntly; ”you would have a much keener sense of happiness if you had much less esteem for philosophy.”

”/Cospetto!/)” said the doctor, rousing himself. ”Just explain, will you?”

”Does not the search after wisdom induce desires not satisfied in this small circle to which your life is confined? It is not so much your country for which you yearn, as it is for space to your intellect, employment for your thoughts, career for your aspirations.”

”You have guessed at the tooth which aches,” said Riccabocca, with admiration.

"Easy to do that," answered the parson. "Our wisdom teeth come last and give us the most pain; and if you would just starve the mind a little, and nourish the heart more, you would be less of a philosopher and more of a—" The parson had the word "Christian" at the tip of his tongue; he suppressed a word that, so spoken, would have been exceedingly irritating, and substituted, with elegant antithesis, "and more of a happy man!"

"I do all I can with my heart," quoth the doctor.

"Not you! For a man with such a heart as yours should never feel the want of the sunshine. My friend, we live in an age of over mental cultivation. We neglect too much the simple healthful outer life, in which there is so much positive joy. In turning to the world within us, we grow blind to this beautiful world without; in studying ourselves as men, we almost forget to look up to heaven, and warm to the smile of God."

The philosopher mechanically shrugged his shoulders, as he always did when another man moralized,—especially if the moralizer were a priest; but there was no irony in his smile, as he answered thoughtfully,—

"There is some truth in what you say. I own that we live too much as if we were all brain. Knowledge has its penalties and pains, as well as its prizes."

"That is just what I want you to say to Leonard."

"How have you settled the object of your journey?"

"I will tell you as we walk down to him after tea. At present, I am rather too much occupied with you."

"Me? The tree is formed—try only to bend the young twig!"

"Trees are trees, and twigs twigs," said the parson, dogmatically; "but man is always growing till he falls into the grave. I think I have heard you say that you once had a narrow escape of a prison?"

"Very narrow."

"Just suppose that you were now in that prison, and that a fairy conjured up the prospect of this quiet home in a safe land; that you saw the orange-trees in flower, felt the evening breeze on your cheek; beheld your child gay or sad, as you smiled or knit your brow; that within this phantom home was a woman, not, indeed, all your young romance might have dreamed of, but faithful and true, every beat of her heart all your own, —would you not cry from the depth of your dungeon, 'O fairy! such a change were a paradise!' Ungrateful man! you want interchange for your

mind, and your heart should suffice for all!"

Riccabocca was touched and silent.

"Come hither, my child," said Mr. Dale, turning round to Violante, who stood still among the flowers, out of hearing, but with watchful eyes. "Come hither," he said, opening his arms.

Violante bounded forward, and nestled to the good man's heart.

"Tell me, Violante, when you are alone in the fields or the garden, and have left your father looking pleased and serene, so that you have no care for him at your heart,—tell me, Violante, though you are all alone, with the flowers below, and the birds singing overhead, do you feel that life itself is happiness or sorrow?"

"Happiness!" answered Violante, half shutting her eyes, and in a measured voice.

"Can you explain what kind of happiness it is?"

"Oh, no, impossible! and it is never the same. Sometimes it is so still—so still, and sometimes so joyous, that I long for wings to fly up to God, and thank Him!"

"O friend," said the parson, "this is the true sympathy between life and nature, and thus we should feel ever, did we take more care to preserve the health and innocence of a child. We are told that we must become as children to enter into the kingdom of Heaven; methinks we should also become as children to know what delight there is in our heritage of earth!"

CHAPTER XVII.

The maid-servant (for Jackeymo was in the fields) brought the table under the awning, and with the English luxury of tea, there were other drinks as cheap and as grateful on summer evenings,—drinks which Jackeymo had retained and taught from the customs of the South,—unebriate liquors, pressed from cooling fruits, sweetened with honey, and deliciously iced: ice should cost nothing in a country in which one is frozen up half the year! And Jackeymo, too, had added to our good, solid, heavy English bread preparations of wheat much lighter, and more propitious to digestion,—with those crisp grissins, which seem to enjoy being eaten, they make so pleasant a noise between one's teeth.

The parson esteemed it a little treat to drink tea with the Riccaboccas.

There was something of elegance and grace in that homely meal at the poor exile's table, which pleased the eye as well as taste. And the very utensils, plain Wedgwood though they were, had a classical simplicity, which made Mrs. Hazeldean's old India delf, and Mrs. Dale's best Worcester china, look tawdry and barbarous in comparison. For it was Flaxman who gave designs to Wedgwood, and the most truly refined of all our manufactures in porcelain (if we do not look to the mere material) is in the reach of the most thrifty.

The little banquet was at first rather a silent one; but Riccabocca threw off his gloom, and became gay and animated. Then poor Mrs. Riccabocca smiled, and pressed the grissins; and Violante, forgetting all her stateliness, laughed and played tricks on the parson, stealing away his cup of warm tea when his head was turned, and substituting iced cherry-juice. Then the parson got up and ran after Violante, making angry faces, and Violante dodged beautifully, till the parson, fairly tired out, was too glad to cry "Peace," and come back to the cherry-juice. Thus time rolled on, till they heard afar the stroke of the distant church-clock, and Mr. Dale started up and cried, "But we shall be too late for Leonard. Come, naughty little girl, get your father his hat."

"And umbrella!" said Riccabocca, looking up at the cloudless, moonlit sky.

"Umbrella against the stars?" asked the parson, laughing. "The stars are no friends of mine," said Riccabocca, "and one never knows what may happen!"

The philosopher and the parson walked on amicably.

"You have done me good," said Riccabocca, "but I hope I am not always so unreasonably melancholic as you seem to suspect. The evenings will sometimes appear long, and dull too, to a man whose thoughts on the past are almost his sole companions."

"Sole companions?—your child?"

"She is so young."

"Your wife?"

"She is so—" the bland Italian appeared to check some disparaging adjective, and mildly added, "so good, I allow; but you must own that she and I cannot have much in common."

"I own nothing of the sort. You have your house and your interests, your happiness and your lives, in common. We men are so exacting, we expect to find ideal nymphs and goddesses when we condescend to marry a mortal; and if we did, our chickens would be boiled to rags, and our mutton come up as cold as a stone."

"Per Bacco, you are an oracle," said Riccabocca, laughing. "But I am not so sceptical as you are. I honour the fair sex too much. There are a great many women who realize the ideal of men, to be found in—the poets!"

"There's my dear Mrs. Dale," resumed the parson, not heeding the sarcastic compliment to the sex, but sinking his voice into a whisper, and looking round cautiously,— "there's my dear Mrs. Dale, the best woman in the world,—an angel I would say, if the word were not profane; BUT—"

"What's the BUT?" asked the doctor, demurely.

"BUT I too might say that 'she and I have not much in common,' if I were only to compare mind to mind, and when my poor Carry says something less profound than Madame de Stael might have said, smile on her in contempt from the elevation of logic and Latin. Yet when I remember all the little sorrows and joys that we have shared together, and feel how solitary I should have been without her—oh, then, I am instantly aware that there is between us in common something infinitely closer and better than if the same course of study had given us the same equality of ideas; and I was forced to brace myself for a combat of intellect, as I am when I fall in with a tiresome sage like yourself. I don't pretend to say that Mrs. Riccabocca is a Mrs. Dale," added the parson, with lofty candour,— "there is but one Mrs. Dale in the world; but still, you have drawn a prize in the wheel matrimonial! Think of Socrates, and yet he was content even with his—Xantippe!"

Dr. Riccabocca called to mind Mrs. Dale's "little tempers," and inly rejoiced that no second Mrs. Dale had existed to fall to his own lot. His placid Jemima gained by the contrast. Nevertheless he had the ill grace to reply, "Socrates was a man beyond all imitation!—Yet I believe that even he spent very few of his evenings at home. But /revenons a nos moutons/, we are nearly at Mrs. Fairfield's cottage, and you have not yet told me what you have settled as to Leonard."

The parson halted, took Riccabocca by the button, and informed him, in very few words, that Leonard was to go to Lansmere to see some relations there, who had the fortune, if they had the will, to give full career to his abilities.

"The great thing, in the mean while," said the parson, "would be to enlighten him a little as to what he calls—enlightenment."

"Ah!" said Riccabocca, diverted, and rubbing his hands, "I shall listen with interest to what you say on that subject."

"And must aid me: for the first step in this modern march of enlightenment is to leave the poor parson behind; and if one calls out 'Hold! and look at the sign-post,' the traveller hurries on the faster,

saying to himself, 'Pooh, pooh!—that is only the cry of the parson!' But my gentleman, when he doubts me, will listen to you,—you're a philosopher!"

"We philosophers are of some use now and then, even to parsons!"

"If you were not so conceited a set of deluded poor creatures already, I would say 'Yes,'" replied the parson, generously; and, taking hold of Riccabocca's umbrella, he applied the brass handle thereof, by way of a knocker, to the cottage door.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Certainly it is a glorious fever,—that desire To Know! And there are few sights in the moral world more sublime than that which many a garret might afford, if Asmodeus would bare the roofs to our survey,—namely, a brave, patient, earnest human being toiling his own arduous way, athwart the iron walls of penury, into the magnificent Infinite, which is luminous with starry souls.

So there sits Leonard the Self-taught in the little cottage alone: for, though scarcely past the hour in which great folks dine, it is the hour in which small folks go to bed, and Mrs. Fairfield has retired to rest, while Leonard has settled to his books.

He had placed his table under the lattice, and from time to time he looked up and enjoyed the stillness of the moon. Well for him that, in reparation for those hours stolen from night, the hardy physical labour commenced with dawn. Students would not be the sad dyspeptics they are, if they worked as many hours in the open air as my scholar-peasant. But even in him you could see that the mind had begun a little to affect the frame. They who task the intellect must pay the penalty with the body. Ill, believe me, would this work-day world get on if all within it were hard-reading, studious animals, playing the deuce with the ganglionic apparatus.

Leonard started as he heard the knock at the door; the parson's well-known voice reassured him. In some surprise he admitted his visitors.

"We are come to talk to you, Leonard," said Mr. Dale; "but I fear we shall disturb Mrs. Fairfield."

"Oh, no, sir! the door to the staircase is shut, and she sleeps soundly."

"Why, this is a French book! Do you read French, Leonard?" asked Riccabocca.

"I have not found French difficult, sir. Once over the grammar, and the language is so clear; it seems the very language for reasoning."

"True. Voltaire said justly, 'Whatever is obscure is not French,'" observed Riccabocca.

"I wish I could say the same of English," muttered the parson.

"But what is this,—Latin too?—Virgil?"

"Yes, sir. But I find I make little way there without a master. I fear I must give it up" (and Leonard sighed).

The two gentlemen exchanged looks, and seated themselves. The young peasant remained standing modestly, and in his air and mien there was something that touched the heart while it pleased the eye. He was no longer the timid boy who had shrunk from the frown of Mr. Stirn, nor that rude personation of simple physical strength, roused to undisciplined bravery, which had received its downfall on the village green of Hazeldean. The power of thought was on his brow,—somewhat unquiet still, but mild and earnest. The features had attained that refinement which is often attributed to race, but comes, in truth, from elegance of idea, whether caught from our parents or learned from books. In his rich brown hair, thrown carelessly from his temples, and curling almost to the shoulders; in his large blue eye, which was deepened to the hue of the violet by the long dark lash; in that firmness of lip, which comes from the grapple with difficulties, there was considerable beauty, but no longer the beauty of the mere peasant. And yet there was still about the whole countenance that expression of goodness and purity which a painter would give to his ideal of the peasant lover,—such as Tasso would have placed in the "Aminta," or Fletcher have admitted to the side of the Faithful Shepherdess.

"You must draw a chair here, and sit down between us, Leonard," said the parson.

"If any one," said Riccabocca, "has a right to sit, it is the one who is to hear the sermon; and if any one ought to stand, it is the one who is about to preach it."

"Don't be frightened, Leonard," said the parson, graciously; "it is only a criticism, not a sermon;" and he pulled out Leonard's Prize Essay.

CHAPTER XIX.

PARSON.—"You take for your motto this aphorism, 'Knowledge is Power.'
—BACON."

RICCABOCCA.—"Bacon make such an aphorism! The last man in the world to have said anything so pert and so shallow!"

LEONARD (astonished).—"Do you mean to say, sir, that that aphorism is not in Lord Bacon? Why, I have seen it quoted as his in almost every newspaper, and in almost every speech in favour of popular education."

RICCABOCCA.—"Then that should be a warning to you never again to fall into the error of the would-be scholar,—

[This aphorism has been probably assigned to Lord Bacon upon the mere authority of the index to his works. It is the aphorism of the index-maker, certainly not of the great master of inductive philosophy. Bacon has, it is true, repeatedly dwelt on the power of knowledge, but with so many explanations and distinctions that nothing could be more unjust to his general meaning than the attempt to cramp into a sentence what it costs him a volume to define. Thus, if on one page he appears to confound knowledge with power, in another he sets them in the strongest antithesis to each other; as follows "Adeo signanter Deus opera potentix et sapientive discriminavit." But it would be as unfair to Bacon to convert into an aphorism the sentence that discriminates between knowledge and power as it is to convert into an aphorism any sentence that confounds them.]

namely, quote second-hand. Lord Bacon wrote a great book to show in what knowledge is power, how that power should be defined, in what it might be mistaken. And, pray, do you think so sensible a man ever would have taken the trouble to write a great book upon the subject, if he could have packed up all he had to say into the portable dogma, 'Knowledge is power'? Pooh! no such aphorism is to be found in Bacon from the first page of his writings to the last."

PARSON (candidly).—"Well, I supposed it was Lord Bacon's, and I am very glad to hear that the aphorism has not the sanction of his authority."

LEONARD (recovering his surprise).—"But why so?"

PARSON.—"Because it either says a great deal too much, or just—nothing at all."

LEONARD.—"At least, sir, it seems to me undeniable."

PARSON.—"Well, grant that it is undeniable. Does it prove much in favour of knowledge? Pray, is not ignorance power too?"

RICCABOCCA.—"And a power that has had much the best end of the quarter-staff."

PARSON.—"All evil is power, and does its power make it anything the better?"

RICCABOCCA.—"Fanaticism is power,—and a power that has often swept away knowledge like a whirlwind. The Mussulman burns the library of a world, and forces the Koran and the sword from the schools of Byzantium to the colleges of Hindostan."

PARSON (bearing on with a new column of illustration).—"Hunger is power. The barbarians, starved out of their forests by their own swarming population, swept into Italy and annihilated letters. The Romans, however degraded, had more knowledge at least than the Gaul and the Visigoth."

RICCABOCCA (bringing up the reserve).—"And even in Greece, when Greek met Greek, the Athenians—our masters in all knowledge—were beat by the Spartans, who held learning in contempt."

PARSON.—"Wherefore you see, Leonard, that though knowledge be power, it is only one of the powers of the world; that there are others as strong, and often much stronger; and the assertion either means but a barren truism, not worth so frequent a repetition, or it means something that you would find it very difficult to prove."

LEONARD.—"One nation may be beaten by another that has more physical strength and more military discipline; which last, permit me to say, sir, is a species of knowledge—"

RICCABOCCA.—"Yes; but your knowledge-mongers at present call upon us to discard military discipline, and the qualities that produce it, from the list of the useful arts. And in your own Essay, you insist upon knowledge as the great disbander of armies, and the foe of all military discipline!"

PARSON.—"Let the young man proceed. Nations, you say, may be beaten by other nations less learned and civilized?"

LEONARD.—"But knowledge elevates a class. I invite the members of my own humble order to knowledge, because knowledge will lift them into power."

RICCABOCCA.—"What do you say to that, Mr. Dale?"

PARSON.—"In the first place, is it true that the class which has the most knowledge gets the most power? I suppose philosophers, like my friend Dr. Riccabocca, think they have the most knowledge. And pray, in what age have philosophers governed the world? Are they not always grumbling that nobody attends to them?"

RICCABOCCA.—"Per Bacco, if people had attended to us, it would have been
a droll sort of world by this time!"

PARSON.—"Very likely. But, as a general rule, those have the most knowledge who give themselves up to it the most. Let us put out of the question philosophers (who are often but ingenious lunatics), and speak only of erudite scholars, men of letters and practical science, professors, tutors, and fellows of colleges. I fancy any member of parliament would tell us that there is no class of men which has less actual influence on public affairs. These scholars have more knowledge than manufacturers and shipowners, squires and farmers; but do you find that they have more power over the Government and the votes of the House of Parliament?"

"They ought to have," said Leonard.

"Ought they?" said the parson; "we'll consider that later. Meanwhile, you must not escape from your own proposition, which is, that knowledge is power,—not that it ought to be. Now, even granting your corollary, that the power of a class is therefore proportioned to its knowledge, pray, do you suppose that while your order, the operatives, are instructing themselves, all the rest of the community are to be at a standstill? Diffuse knowledge as you may, you will never produce equality of knowledge. Those who have most leisure, application, and aptitude for learning will still know the most. Nay, by a very natural law, the more general the appetite for knowledge, the more the increased competition will favour those most adapted to excel by circumstance and nature. At this day, there is a vast increase of knowledge spread over all society, compared with that in the Middle Ages; but is there not a still greater distinction between the highly educated gentleman and the intelligent mechanic, than there was then between the baron who could not sign his name and the churl at the plough; between the accomplished statesman, versed in all historical lore, and the voter whose politics are formed by his newspaper, than there was between the legislator who passed laws against witches and the burgher who defended his guild from some feudal aggression; between the enlightened scholar and the dunce of

to-day, than there was between the monkish alchemist and the blockhead of yesterday? Peasant, voter, and dunce of this century are no doubt wiser than the churl, burgher, and blockhead of the twelfth. But the gentleman, statesman, and scholar of the present age are at least quite as favourable a contrast to the alchemist, witch-burner, and baron of old. As the progress of enlightenment has done hitherto, so will it ever do.

”Knowledge is like capital: the more there is in a country, the greater the disparities in wealth between one man and another. Therefore, if the working class increase in knowledge, so do the other classes; and if the working class rise peaceably and legitimately into power, it is not in proportion to their own knowledge alone, but rather according as it seems to the knowledge of the other orders of the community, that such augmentation of proportional power is just and safe and wise.”

Placed between the parson and the philosopher, Leonard felt that his position was not favourable to the display of his forces. Insensibly he edged his chair somewhat away, and said mournfully,—

”Then, according to you, the reign of knowledge would be no great advance in the aggregate freedom and welfare of man?”

PARSON.—”Let us define. By knowledge, do you mean intellectual cultivation; by the reign of knowledge, the ascendancy of the most cultivated minds?”

LEONARD (after a pause).—”Yes.”

RICCABOCCA.—”Oh, indiscreet young man! that is an unfortunate concession of yours; for the ascendancy of the most cultivated minds would be a terrible oligarchy!”

PARSON.—”Perfectly true; and we now reply to your assertion that men who, by profession, have most learning, ought to have more influence than squires and merchants, farmers and mechanics. Observe, all the knowledge that we mortals can acquire is not knowledge positive and perfect, but knowledge comparative, and subject to the errors and passions of humanity. And suppose that you could establish, as the sole regulators of affairs, those who had the most mental cultivation, do you think they would not like that power well enough to take all means which their superior intelligence could devise to keep it to themselves? The experiment was tried of old by the priests of Egypt; and in the empire of China, at this day, the aristocracy are elected from those who have most distinguished themselves in learned colleges. If I may call myself a member of that body, ’the people,’ I would rather be an Englishman, however much displeased with dull ministers and blundering parliaments, than I would be a Chinese under the rule of the picked sages of the Celestial Empire. Happily, therefore, my dear Leonard, nations are

governed by many things besides what is commonly called knowledge; and the greatest practical ministers, who, like Themistocles, have made small States great, and the most dominant races, who, like the Romans, have stretched their rule from a village half over the universe, have been distinguished by various qualities which a philosopher would sneer at, and a knowledge-monger would call 'sad prejudices' and 'lamentable errors of reason.'"

LEONARD (bitterly).—"Sir, you make use of knowledge itself to argue against knowledge."

PARSON.—"I make use of the little I know to prove the foolishness of idolatry. I do not argue against knowledge; I argue against knowledge-worship. For here, I see in your Essay, that you are not contented with raising human knowledge into something like divine omnipotence,—you must also confound her with virtue. According to you, it is but to diffuse the intelligence of the few among the many, and all at which we preachers aim is accomplished. Nay, more; for, whereas we humble preachers have never presumed to say, with the heathen Stoic, that even virtue is sure of happiness below (though it be the best road to it), you tell us plainly that this knowledge of yours gives not only the virtue of a saint, but bestows the bliss of a god. Before the steps of your idol, the evils of life disappear. To hear you, one has but 'to know,' in order to be exempt from the sins and sorrows of the ignorant. Has it ever been so? Grant that you diffuse amongst the many all the knowledge ever attained by the few. Have the wise few been so unerring and so happy? You supposed that your motto was accurately cited from Bacon. What was Bacon himself? The poet tells you

"The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind!"

"Can you hope to bestow upon the vast mass of your order the luminous intelligence of this 'Lord Chancellor of Nature'? Grant that you do so, and what guarantee have you for the virtue and the happiness which you assume as the concomitants of the gift? See Bacon himself: what black ingratitude! what miserable self-seeking! what truckling servility! what abject and pitiful spirit! So far from intellectual knowledge, in its highest form and type, insuring virtue and bliss, it is by no means uncommon to find great mental cultivation combined with great moral corruption." (Aside to Riccabocca.—"Push on, will you?")

RICCASOCCA.—"A combination remarkable in eras as in individuals. Petronius shows us a state of morals at which a commonplace devil would blush, in the midst of a society more intellectually cultivated than certainly was that which produced Regulus or the Horatii. And the most learned eras in modern Italy were precisely those which brought the vices into the most ghastly refinement."

LEONARD (rising in great agitation, and clasping his hands).—"I cannot contend with you, who produce against information so slender and crude as

mine the stores which have been locked from my reach; but I feel that there must be another side to this shield,—a shield that you will not even allow to be silver. And, oh, if you thus speak of knowledge, why have you encouraged me to know?”

CHAPTER XX.

”Ah, my son!” said the parson, ”if I wished to prove the value of religion, would you think I served it much if I took as my motto, ’Religion is power’? Would not that be a base and sordid view of its advantages? And would you not say, He who regards religion as a power intends to abuse it as a priestcraft?”

”Well put!” said Riccabocca.

”Wait a moment—let me think! Ah, I see, Sir!” said Leonard.

PARSON.—”If the cause be holy, do not weigh it in the scales of the market; if its objects be peaceful, do not seek to arm it with the weapons of strife; if it is to be the cement of society, do not vaunt it as the triumph of class against class.”

LEONARD (ingenuously).—”You correct me nobly, sir. Knowledge is power, but not in the sense in which I have interpreted the saying.”

PARSON.—”Knowledge is one of the powers in the moral world, but one that, in its immediate result, is not always of the most worldly advantage to the possessor. It is one of the slowest, because one of the most durable, of agencies. It may take a thousand years for a thought to come into power; and the thinker who originated it might have died in rags or in chains.”

RICCABOCCA.—”Our Italian proverb saith that ’the teacher is like the candle, which lights others in consuming itself.’”

PARSON.—”Therefore he who has the true ambition of knowledge should entertain it for the power of his idea, not for the power it may bestow on himself: it should be lodged in the conscience, and, like the conscience, look for no certain reward on this side the grave. And since knowledge is compatible with good and with evil, would not it be better to say, ’Knowledge is a trust’?”

”You are right, sir,” said Leonard, cheerfully; ”pray proceed.”

PARSON.—”You ask me why we encourage you to KNOW. First, because (as

you say yourself in your Essay) knowledge, irrespective of gain, is in itself a delight, and ought to be something far more. Like liberty, like religion, it may be abused; but I have no more right to say that the poor shall be ignorant than I have to say that the rich only shall be free, and that the clergy alone shall learn the truths of redemption. You truly observe in your treatise that knowledge opens to us other excitements than those of the senses, and another life than that of the moment. The difference between us is this,—that you forget that the same refinement which brings us new pleasures exposes us to new pains; the horny hand of the peasant feels not the nettles which sting the fine skin of the scholar. You forget also, that whatever widens the sphere of the desires opens to them also new temptations. Vanity, the desire of applause, pride, the sense of superiority, gnawing discontent where that superiority is not recognized, morbid susceptibility, which comes with all new feelings, the underrating of simple pleasures apart from the intellectual, the chase of the imagination, often unduly stimulated, for things unattainable below,—all these are surely amongst the first temptations that beset the entrance into knowledge.” Leonard shaded his face with his hand.

”Hence,” continued the parson, benignantly,—”hence, so far from considering that we do all that is needful to accomplish ourselves as men, when we cultivate only the intellect, we should remember that we thereby continually increase the range of our desires, and therefore of our temptations; and we should endeavour, simultaneously, to cultivate both those affections of the heart which prove the ignorant to be God’s children no less than the wise, and those moral qualities which have made men great and good when reading and writing were scarcely known: to wit, —patience and fortitude under poverty and distress; humility and beneficence amidst grandeur and wealth, and, in counteraction to that egotism which all superiority, mental or worldly, is apt to inspire, Justice, the father of all the more solid virtues, softened by Charity, which is their loving mother. Thus accompanied, knowledge indeed becomes the magnificent crown of humanity,—not the imperious despot, but the checked and tempered sovereign of the soul.”

The parson paused, and Leonard, coming near him, timidly took his hand, with a child’s affectionate and grateful impulse.

RICCAROCCA.—”And if, Leonard, you are not satisfied with our parson’s excellent definitions, you have only to read what Lord Bacon himself has said upon the true ends of knowledge to comprehend at once how angry the poor great man, whom Mr. Dale treats so harshly, would have been with those who have stinted his elaborate distinctions and provident cautions into that coxcombical little aphorism, and then misconstrued all he designed to prove in favour of the commandment, and authority of learning. For,” added the sage, looking up as a man does when he is tasking his memory, ”I think it is thus that after saying the greatest error of all is the mistaking or misplacing the end of knowledge, and denouncing the various objects for which it is vulgarly sought,—I think

it is thus that Lord Bacon proceeds: 'Knowledge is not a shop for profit or sale, but a rich storehouse for the glory of the Creator, and the relief of men's estate.'

["But the greatest error of all the rest is the mistaking or misplacing of the last or farthest end of knowledge: for men have entered into a desire of learning and knowledge, sometimes upon a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite; sometimes to entertain their minds with variety and delight; sometimes for ornament and reputation; and sometimes to enable them to victory of wit and contradiction; and most times for lucre and profession"—[that is, for most of those objects which are meant by the ordinary titers of the saying, "Knowledge is power"]—"and seldom sincerely to give a true account of these gifts of reason to the benefit and use of men, as if there were sought in knowledge a couch whereupon to rest a searching and restless spirit; or a terrace for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down, with a fair prospect; or a tower of state for a proud mind to raise itself upon; or a fort or commanding ground for strife and contention; or a shop for profit or sale,—and not a rich storehouse for the glory of the Creator, and the relief of men's estate."—Advancement of Learning, Book I.]

PARSON (remorsefully).—"Are those Lord Bacon's words? I am very sorry I spoke so uncharitably of his life. I must examine it again. I may find excuses for it now that I could not when I first formed my judgment. I was then a raw lad at Oxford. But I see, Leonard, there is still something on your mind."

LEONARD.—"It is true, sir: I would but ask whether it is not by knowledge that we arrive at the qualities and virtues you so well describe, but which you seem to consider as coming to us through channels apart from knowledge?"

PARSON.—"If you mean by the word 'knowledge' something very different from what you express in your Essay—and which those contending for mental instruction, irrespective of religion and ethics, appear also to convey by the word—you are right; but, remember, we have already agreed that by the word 'knowledge' we mean culture purely intellectual."

LEONARD.—"That is true,—we so understood it."

PARSON.—"Thus, when this great Lord Bacon erred, you may say that he erred from want of knowledge,—the knowledge which moralists and preachers would convey. But Lord Bacon had read all that moralists and preachers could say on such matters; and he certainly did not err from want of intellectual cultivation. Let me here, my child, invite you to observe, that He who knew most of our human hearts and our immortal destinies did not insist on this intellectual culture as essential to the virtues that form our well-being here, and conduce to our salvation

hereafter. Had it been essential, the All-wise One would not have selected humble fishermen for the teachers of His doctrine, instead of culling His disciples from Roman portico or Athenian academe. And this, which distinguishes so remarkably the Gospel from the ethics of heathen philosophy, wherein knowledge is declared to be necessary to virtue, is a proof how slight was the heathen sage's insight into the nature of mankind, when compared with the Saviour's; for hard indeed would it be to men, whether high or low, rich or poor, if science and learning, or contemplative philosophy, were the sole avenues to peace and redemption; since, in this state of ordeal requiring active duties, very few in any age, whether they be high or low, rich or poor, ever are or can be devoted to pursuits merely mental. Christ does not represent Heaven as a college for the learned. Therefore the rules of the Celestial Legislator are rendered clear to the simplest understanding as to the deepest."

RICCABOCCA.—"And that which Plato and Zeno, Pythagoras and Socrates could not do, was done by men whose ignorance would have been a by-word in the schools of the Greek. The gods of the vulgar were dethroned; the face of the world was changed! This thought may make us allow, indeed, that there are agencies more powerful than mere knowledge, and ask, after all, what is the mission which knowledge should achieve?"

PARSON.—"The Sacred Book tells us even that; for after establishing the truth that, for the multitude, knowledge is not essential to happiness and good, it accords still to knowledge its sublime part in the revelation prepared and announced. When an instrument of more than ordinary intelligence was required for a purpose divine; when the Gospel, recorded by the simple, was to be explained by the acute, enforced by the energetic, carried home to the doubts of the Gentile, the Supreme Will joined to the zeal of the earlier apostles the learning and genius of Saint Paul,—not holier than the others, calling himself the least, yet labouring more abundantly than they all, making himself all things unto all men, so that some might be saved. The ignorant may be saved no less surely than the wise; but here comes the wise man who helps to save. And how the fulness and animation of this grand Presence, of this indomitable Energy, seem to vivify the toil, and to speed the work! 'In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils amongst false brethren.'⁷ Behold, my son! does not Heaven here seem to reveal the true type of Knowledge,—a sleepless activity, a pervading agency, a dauntless heroism, an all-supporting faith?—a power, a power indeed; a power apart from the aggrandizement of self; a power that brings to him who owns and transmits it but 'weariness and painfulness; in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness,'—but a power distinct from the mere circumstance of the man, rushing from him as rays from the sun; borne through the air, and clothing it with light, piercing under earth, and calling forth the harvest. Worship not knowledge, worship not the sun, O my child! Let the sun but proclaim the Creator; let the knowledge but illumine the worship!"

The good man, overcome by his own earnestness, paused; his head drooped on the young student's breast, and all three were long silent.

CHAPTER XXI.

Whatever ridicule may be thrown upon Mr. Dale's dissertations by the wit of the enlightened, they had a considerable, and I think a beneficial, effect upon Leonard Fairfield,—an effect which may perhaps create less surprise, when the reader remembers that Leonard was unaccustomed to argument, and still retained many of the prejudices natural to his rustic breeding. Nay, he actually thought it possible that, as both Riccabocca and Mr. Dale were more than double his age, and had had opportunities not only of reading twice as many books, but of gathering up experience in wider ranges of life,—he actually, I say, thought it possible that they might be better acquainted with the properties and distinctions of knowledge than himself. At all events, the parson's words were so far well-timed, that they produced in Leonard very much of that state of mind which Mr. Dale desired to effect, before communicating to him the startling intelligence that he was to visit relations whom he had never seen, of whom he had heard but little, and that it was at least possible that the result of that visit might be to open to him greater facilities for instruction, and a higher degree in life.

Without some such preparation, I fear that Leonard would have gone forth into the world with an exaggerated notion of his own acquirements, and with a notion yet more exaggerated as to the kind of power that such knowledge as he possessed would obtain for itself. As it was, when Mr. Dale broke to him the news of the experimental journey before him, cautioning him against being over sanguine, Leonard received the intelligence with a serious meekness, and thoughts that were nobly solemn.

When the door closed on his visitors, he remained for some moments motionless, and in deep meditation; then he unclosed the door and stole forth. The night was already far advanced, the heavens were luminous with all the host of stars. "I think," said the student, referring, in later life, to that crisis in his destiny,—"I think it was then, as I stood alone, yet surrounded by worlds so numberless, that I first felt the distinction between mind and soul."

"Tell me," said Riccabocca, as he parted company with Mr. Dale, "whether you would have given to Frank Hazeldean, on entering life, the same lecture on the limits and ends of knowledge which you have bestowed on Leonard Fairfield?"

"My friend," quoth the parson, with a touch of human conceit, "I have ridden on horseback, and I know that some horses should be guided by the bridle, and some should be urged by the spur."

"/Cospetto!/" said Riccabocca, "you contrive to put every experience of yours to some use,—even your journey on Mr. Hazeldean's pad. And I now see why, in this little world of a village, you have picked up so general an acquaintance with life."

"Did you ever read White's' Natural History of Selborne'?"

"No."

"Do so, and you will find that you need not go far to learn the habits of birds, and know the difference between a swallow and a swift. Learn the difference in a village, and you know the difference wherever swallows and swifts skim the air."

"Swallows and swifts!—true; but men—"

"Are with us all the year round,—which is more than we can say of swallows and swifts."

"Mr. Dale," said Riccabocca, taking off his hat with great formality, "if ever again I find myself in a dilemma, I will come to you instead of to Machiavelli."

"Ah!" cried the parson, "if I could but have a calm hour's talk with you on the errors of the Papal relig—"

Riccabocca was off like a shot.

CHAPTER XXII.

The next day Mr. Dale had a long conversation with Mrs. Fairfield. At first he found some difficulty in getting over her pride, and inducing her to accept overtures from parents who had so long slighted both Leonard and herself. And it would have been in vain to have put before the good woman the worldly advantages which such overtures implied. But when Mr. Dale said, almost sternly, "Your parents are old, your father infirm; their least wish should be as binding to you as their command," the widow bowed her head, and said,—

"God bless them, sir, I was very sinful 'Honour your father and mother.' I'm no schollard, but I know the Commandments. Let Lenny go. But he'll soon forget me, and mayhap he'll learn to be ashamed of me."

"There I will trust him," said the parson; and he contrived easily to reassure and soothe her.

It was not till all this was settled that Mr. Dale drew forth an unsealed letter, which Mr. Richard Avenel, taking his hint, had given to him, as from Leonard's grandparents, and said, "This is for you, and it contains an inclosure of some value."

"Will you read it, sir? As I said before, I'm no schollard."

"But Leonard is, and he will read it to you."

When Leonard returned home that evening, Mrs. Fairfield showed him the letter. It ran thus:—

DEAR JANE,—Mr. Dale will tell you that we wish Leonard to come to us. We are glad to hear you are well. We forward, by Mr. Dale, a bank-note for L50, which comes from Richard, your brother. So no more at present from your affectionate parents,

JOHN AND MARGARET AVENEL.

The letter was in a stiff female scrawl, and Leonard observed that two or three mistakes in spelling had been corrected, either in another pen or in a different hand.

"Dear brother Dick, how good in him!" cried the widow. When I saw there was money, I thought it must be him. How I should like to see Dick again! But I s'pose he's still in Amerikay. Well, well, this will buy clothes for you."

"No; you must keep it all, Mother, and put it in the Savings Bank."

"I 'm not quite so silly as that," cried Mrs. Fairfield, with contempt; and she put the L50 into a cracked teapot.

"It must not stay there when I 'm gone. You may be robbed, Mother."

"Dear me, dear me, that's true. What shall I do with it? What do I want with it, too? Dear me! I wish they hadn't sent it. I sha' n't sleep in peace. You must e'en put it in your own pouch, and button it up tight, boy."

Lenny smiled, and took the note; but he took it to Mr. Dale, and begged him to put it into the Savings Bank for his mother.

The day following he went to take leave of his master, of Jackeymo, of the fountain, the garden. But after he had gone through the first of these adieus with Jackeymo—who, poor man, indulged in all the lively

gesticulations of grief which make half the eloquence of his countrymen, and then, absolutely blubbing, hurried away—Leonard himself was so affected that he could not proceed at once to the house, but stood beside the fountain, trying hard to keep back his tears.

”You, Leonard—and you are going!” said a soft voice; and the tears fell faster than ever, for he recognized the voice of Violante.

”Do not cry,” continued the child, with a kind of tender gravity. ”You are going, but Papa says it would be selfish in us to grieve, for it is for your good; and we should be glad. But I am selfish, Leonard, and I do grieve. I shall miss you sadly.”

”You, young lady,—you miss me?”

”Yes; but I do not cry, Leonard, for I envy you, and I wish I were a boy: I wish I could do as you.”

The girl clasped her hands, and reared her slight form, with a kind of passionate dignity.

”Do as me, and part from all those you love!”

”But to serve those you love. One day you will come back to your mother’s cottage, and say, ’I have conquered fortune.’ Oh that I could go forth and return, as you will! But my father has no country, and his only child is a useless girl.”

As Violante spoke, Leonard had dried his tears: her emotion distracted him from his own.

”Oh,” continued Violante, again raising her head loftily, ”what it is to be a man! A woman sighs, ’I wish,’ but a man should say, ’I will.’”

Occasionally before Leonard had noted fitful flashes of a nature grand and heroic in the Italian child, especially of late,—flashes the more remarkable from the contrast to a form most exquisitely feminine, and to a sweetness of temper which made even her pride gentle. But now it seemed as if the child spoke with the command of a queen,—almost with the inspiration of a Muse. A strange and new sense of courage entered within him.

”May I remember these words!” he murmured, half audibly.

The girl turned and surveyed him with eyes brighter for their moisture. She then extended her hand to him, with a quick movement, and as he bent over it, with a grace taught to him by genuine emotion, she said, ”And if you do, then, girl and child as I am, I shall think I have aided a brave heart in the great strife for honour!”

She lingered a moment, smiled as if to herself, and then, gliding away, was lost amongst the trees.

After a long pause, in which Leonard recovered slowly from the surprise and agitation into which Violante had thrown his spirits—previously excited as they were—he went, murmuring to himself, towards the house. But Riccabocca was from home. Leonard turned mechanically to the terrace, and busied himself with the flowers; but the dark eyes of Violante shone on his thoughts, and her voice rang in his ear.

At length Riccabocca appeared on the road, attended by a labourer, who carried something indistinct under his arm. The Italian beckoned to Leonard to follow him into the parlour, and after conversing with him kindly, and at some length, and packing up, as it were, a considerable provision of wisdom in the portable shape of aphorisms and proverbs, the sage left him alone for a few moments. Riccabocca then returned with his wife, and bearing a small knapsack:—

”It is not much we can do for you, Leonard, and money is the worst gift in the world for a keepsake; but my wife and I have put our heads together to furnish you with a little outfit. Giacomo, who was in our secret, assures us that the clothes will fit; and stole, I fancy, a coat of yours, to have the right measure. Put them on when you go to your relations: it is astonishing what a difference it makes in the ideas people form of us, according as our coats are cut one way or another. I should not be presentable in London thus; and nothing is more true than that a tailor is often the making of a man.”

”The shirts, too, are very good holland,” said Mrs. Riccabocca, about to open the knapsack.

”Never mind details, my dear,” cried the wise man; ”shirts are comprehended in the general principle of clothes. And, Leonard, as a remembrance somewhat more personal, accept this, which I have worn many a year when time was a thing of importance to me, and nobler fates than mine hung on a moment. We missed the moment, or abused it; and here I am a waif on a foreign shore. Methinks I have done with Time.”

The exile, as he thus spoke, placed in Leonard’s reluctant hands a watch that would have delighted an antiquary, and shocked a dandy. It was exceedingly thick, having an outer case of enamel and an inner one of gold. The hands and the figures of the hours had originally been formed of brilliants; but the brilliants had long since vanished. Still, even thus bereft, the watch was much more in character with the giver than the receiver, and was as little suited to Leonard as would have been the red silk umbrella.

”It is old-fashioned,” said Mrs. Riccabocca; ”but it goes better than any clock in the county. I really think it will last to the end of the world.”

"/Carissima mia!/" cried the doctor, "I thought I had convinced you that the world is by no means come to its last legs."

"Oh, I did not mean anything, Alphonso," said Mrs. Riccabocca, colouring.

"And that is all we do mean when we talk about that of which we can know nothing," said the doctor, less gallantly than usual, for he resented that epithet of "old-fashioned," as applied to the watch.

Leonard, we see, had been silent all this time; he could not speak,—literally and truly, he could not speak. How he got out of his embarrassment and how he got out of the room, he never explained to my satisfaction. But a few minutes afterwards, he was seen hurrying down the road very briskly.

Riccabocca and his wife stood at the window gazing after him.

"There is a depth in that boy's heart," said the sage, "which might float an argosy."

"Poor dear boy! I think we have put everything into the knapsack that he can possibly want," said good Mrs. Riccabocca, musingly.

THE DOCTOR (continuing his soliloquy).—"They are strong, but they are not immediately apparent."

MRS. RICCABOCCA (resuming hers).—"They are at the bottom of the knapsack."

THE DOCTOR.—"They will stand long wear and tear."

MRS. RICCABOCCA.—"A year, at least, with proper care at the wash."

THE DOCTOR (startled).—"Care at the wash! What on earth are you talking of, ma'am?"

MRS. RICCABOCCA (mildly).—"The shirts, to be sure, my love! And you?"

THE DOCTOR (with a heavy sigh).—"The feelings, ma'am!" Then, after a pause, taking his wife's hand affectionately, "But you did quite right to think of the shirts: Mr. Dale said very truly—"

MRS. RICCABOCCA.—"What?"

THE DOCTOR.—"That there was a great deal in common between us—even when I think of feelings, and you but of—shirts!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

Mr. and Mrs. Avenel sat within the parlour, Mr. Richard stood on the hearthrug, whistling "Yankee Doodle." "The parson writes word that the lad will come to-day," said Richard, suddenly; "let me see the letter,—ay, to-day. If he took the coach as far as ——, he might walk the rest of the way in two or three hours. He should be pretty nearly here. I have a great mind to go and meet him: it will save his asking questions, and hearing about me. I can clear the town by the back way, and get out at the high road."

"You'll not know him from any one else," said Mrs. Avenel.

"Well, that is a good one! Not know an Avenel! We've all the same cut of the jib,—have we not, Father?"

Poor John laughed heartily, till the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"We were always a well-favoured fam'ly," said John, recomposing himself. "There was Luke, but he's gone; and Harry, but he's dead too; and Dick, but he's in Amerikay—no, he's here; and my darling Nora, but—"

"Hush!" interrupted Mrs. Avenel; "hush, John!"

The old man stared at her, and then put his tremulous hand to his brow. "And Nora's gone too!" said he, in a voice of profound woe. Both hands then fell on his knees, and his head drooped on his breast.

Mrs. Avenel rose, kissed her husband on the forehead, and walked away to the window. Richard took up his hat and brushed the nap carefully with his handkerchief; but his lips quivered.

"I 'm going," said he, abruptly. "Now mind, Mother, not a word about uncle Richard yet; we must first see how we like each other, and—in a whisper] you'll try and get that into my poor father's head?"

"Ay, Richard," said Mrs. Avenel, quietly. Richard put on his hat and went out by the back way. He stole along the fields that skirted the town, and had only once to cross the street before he got into the high road.

He walked on till he came to the first milestone. There he seated himself, lighted his cigar, and awaited his nephew. It was now nearly the hour of sunset, and the road before him lay westward. Richard, from time to time, looked along the road, shading his eyes with his hand; and at length, just as the disk of the sun had half sunk down the horizon, a solitary figure came up the way. It emerged suddenly from the turn in the road; the reddening beams coloured all the atmosphere around it.

Solitary and silent it came as from a Land of Light.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"You have been walking far, young man?" said Richard Avenel.

"No, sir, not very. That is Lansmere before me, is it not?"

"Yes, it is Lansmere; you stop there, I guess?"

Leonard made a sign in the affirmative, and walked on a few paces; then, seeing the stranger who had accosted him still by his side, he said,—

"If you know the town, sir, perhaps you will have the goodness to tell me whereabouts Mr. Avenel lives?"

"I can put you into a straight cut across the fields, that will bring you just behind the house."

"You are very kind, but it will take you out of your way."

"No, it is in my way. So you are going to Mr. Avenel's?—a good old gentleman."

"I've always heard so; and Mrs. Avenel—"

"A particular superior woman," said Richard. "Any one else to ask after?—I know the family well."

"No, thank you, sir."

"They have a son, I believe; but he's in America, is he not?"

"I believe he is, sir."

"I see the parson has kept faith with me muttered Richard."

"If you can tell me anything about HIM," said Leonard, "I should be very glad."

"Why so, young man? Perhaps he is hanged by this time."

"Hanged!"

"He was a sad dog, I am told."

"Then you have been told very falsely," said Leonard, colouring.

"A sad wild dog; his parents were so glad when he cut and run,—went off to the States. They say he made money; but, if so, he neglected his relations shamefully."

"Sir," said Leonard, "you are wholly misinformed. He has been most generous to a relation who had little claim on him: and I never heard his name mentioned but with love and praise."

Richard instantly fell to whistling "Yankee Doodle," and walked on several paces without saying a word. He then made a slight apology for his impertinence, hoped no offence, and, with his usual bold but astute style of talk, contrived to bring out something of his companion's mind. He was evidently struck with the clearness and propriety with which Leonard expressed himself, raised his eyebrows in surprise more than once, and looked him full in the face with an attentive and pleased survey. Leonard had put on the new clothes with which Riccabocca and his wife had provided him. They were those appropriate to a young country tradesman in good circumstances; but as Leonard did not think about the clothes, so he had unconsciously something of the ease of the gentleman.

They now came into the fields. Leonard paused before a slip of ground sown with rye.

"I should have thought grass-land would have answered better so near a town," said he.

"No doubt it would," answered Richard; "but they are sadly behind-hand in these parts. You see the great park yonder, on the other side of the road? That would answer better for rye than grass; but then, what would become of my Lord's deer? The aristocracy eat us up, young man."

"But the aristocracy did not sow this piece with rye, I suppose?" said Leonard, smiling.

"And what do you conclude from that?"

"Let every man look to his own ground," said Leonard, with a cleverness of repartee caught from Dr. Riccabocca.

"'Cute lad you are," said Richard; "and we'll talk more of these matters another time."

They now came within sight of Mr. Avenel's house.

"You can get through the gap in the hedge, by the old pollard-oak," said Richard; "and come round by the front of the house. Why, you're not afraid, are you?"

"I am a stranger."

"Shall I introduce you? I told you that I knew the old couple."

"Oh, no, sir! I would rather meet them alone."

"Go; and—wait a bit—hark ye, young man, Mrs. Avenel is a cold-mannered woman; but don't be abashed by that." Leonard thanked the good-natured stranger, crossed the field, passed the gap, and paused a moment under the stunted shade of the old hollow-hearted oak. The ravens were returning to their nests. At the sight of a human form under the tree they wheeled round and watched him afar. From the thick of the boughs, the young ravens sent their hoarse low cry.

CHAPTER XXV.

The young man entered the neat, prim, formal parlour. "You are welcome!" said Mrs. Avenel, in a firm voice. "The gentleman is heartily welcome," cried poor John.

"It is your grandson, Leonard Fairfield," said Mrs. Avenel. But John, who had risen with knocking knees, gazed hard at Leonard, and then fell on his breast, sobbing aloud, "Nora's eyes!—he has a blink in his eye like Nora's."

Mrs. Avenel approached with a steady step, and drew away the old man tenderly.

"He is a poor creature," she whispered to Leonard; "you excite him. Come away, I will show you your room." Leonard followed her up the stairs, and came into a room neatly and even prettily furnished. The carpet and curtains were faded by the sun, and of old-fashioned pattern; there was a look about the room as if it had been long disused. Mrs. Avenel sank down on the first chair on entering. Leonard drew his arm round her waist affectionately: "I fear that I have put you out sadly, my dear grandmother." Mrs. Avenel glided hastily from his arm, and her countenance worked much, every nerve in it twitching, as it were; then, placing her hand on his locks, she said with passion, "God bless you, my grandson," and left the room.

Leonard dropped his knapsack on the floor, and looked around him wistfully. The room seemed as if it had once been occupied by a female. There was a work-box on the chest of drawers, and over it hanging shelves for books, suspended by ribbons that had once been blue, with silk and fringe appended to each shelf, and knots and tassels here and there,—the taste of a woman, or rather of a girl, who seeks to give a grace to the

commonest things around her. With the mechanical habit of a student, Leonard took down one or two of the volumes still left on the shelves. He found Spenser's "Faerie Queene," Racine in French, Tasso in Italian; and on the fly-leaf of each volume, in the exquisite handwriting familiar to his memory, the name "Leonora." He kissed the books, and replaced them with a feeling akin both to tenderness and awe.

He had not been alone in his room more than a quarter of an hour before the maid-servant knocked at his door and summoned him to tea.

Poor John had recovered his spirits, and his wife sat by his side, holding his hand in hers. Poor John was even gay. He asked many questions about his daughter Jane, and did not wait for the answers. Then he spoke about the squire, whom he confounded with Audley Egerton, and talked of elections and the Blue party, and hoped Leonard would always be a good Blue; and then he fell to his tea and toast, and said no more.

Mrs. Avenel spoke little, but she eyed Leonard askant, as it were, from time to time; and, after each glance, the nerves of the poor severe face twitched again.

A little after nine o'clock, Mrs. Avenel lighted a candle, and placing it in Leonard's hand, said, "You must be tired,—you know your own room now. Good-night."

Leonard took the light, and, as was his wont with his mother, kissed Mrs. Avenel on the cheek. Then he took John's hand and kissed him too. The old man was half asleep, and murmured dreamily, "That's Nora."

Leonard had retired to his room about half an hour, when Richard Avenel entered the house softly, and joined his parents.

"Well, Mother?" said he.

"Well, Richard, you have seen him?"

"And like him. Do you know he has a great look of poor Nora?—more like her than Jane."

"Yes; he is handsomer than Jane ever was, but more like your father than any one. John was so comely. You take to the boy, then?"

"Ay, that I do. Just tell him in the morning that he is to go with a gentleman who will be his friend, and don't say more. The chaise shall be at the door after breakfast. Let him get into it: I shall wait for him out of the town. What's the room you gave him?"

"The room you would not take."

"The room in which Nora slept? Oh, no! I could not have slept a wink there. What a charm there was in that girl! how we all loved her! But she was too beautiful and good for us,—too good to live!"

"None of us are too good," said Mrs. Avenel, with great austerity, "and I beg you will not talk in that way. Goodnight,—I must get your poor father to bed."

When Leonard opened his eyes the next morning, they rested on the face of Mrs. Avenel, which was bending over his pillow. But it was long before he could recognize that countenance, so changed was its expression,—so tender, so mother-like. Nay, the face of his own mother had never seemed to him so soft with a mother's passion.

"Ah!" he murmured, half rising, and flinging his young arms round her neck. Mrs. Avenel, this time taken by surprise, warmly returned the embrace; she clasped him to her breast, she kissed him again and again. At length, with a quick start, she escaped, and walked up and down the room, pressing her hands tightly together. When she halted, her face had recovered its usual severity and cold precision.

"It is time for you to rise, Leonard," said she. "You will leave us to-day. A gentleman has promised to take charge of you, and do for you more than we can. A chaise will be at the door soon,—make haste."

John was absent from the breakfast-table. His wife said that he never rose till late, and must not be disturbed.

The meal was scarcely over before a chaise and pair came to the door.

"You must not keep the chaise waiting,—the gentleman is very punctual."

"But he is not come."

"No; he has walked on before, and will get in after you are out of the town."

"What is his name, and why should he care for me, Grandmother?"

"He will tell you himself. Be quick."

"But you will bless me again, Grandmother? I love you already."

"I do bless you," said Mrs. Avenel, firmly. "Be honest and good, and beware of the first false step." She pressed his hand with a convulsive grasp, and led him to the outer door.

The postboy clanked his whip, the chaise rattled off. Leonard put his head out of the window to catch a last glimpse of the old woman; but the boughs of the pollard-oak, and its gnarled decaying trunk, hid her from

his eye, and look as he would, till the road turned, he saw but the melancholy tree.