

THE CAXTONS - PART 6

EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON*

PART VI.

CHAPTER I.

"I don't know that," said my father.

What is it my father does not know? My father does not know that "happiness is our being's end and aim."

And pertinent to what does my father reply, by words so sceptical, to an assertion so seldom disputed?

Reader, Mr. Trevanion has been half an hour seated in our little drawing-room. He has received two cups of tea from my mother's fair hand; he has made himself at home. With Mr. Trevanion has come another friend of my father's, whom he has not seen since he left college,—Sir Sedley Beaudesert.

Now, you must understand that it is a warm night, a little after nine o'clock,—a night between departing summer and approaching autumn. The windows are open; we have a balcony, which my mother has taken care to fill with flowers; the air, though we are in London, is sweet and fresh; the street quiet, except that an occasional carriage or hackney cabriolet rolls rapidly by; a few stealthy passengers pass to and fro noiselessly on their way homeward. We are on classic ground,—near that old and venerable Museum, the dark monastic pile which the taste of the age had spared then,—and the quiet of the temple seems to hallow the precincts. Captain Roland is seated by the fire-place, and though there is no fire, he is shading his face with a hand-screen; my father and Mr. Trevanion have drawn their chairs close to each other in the middle of the room; Sir Sedley Beaudesert leans against the wall near the window, and behind my mother, who looks prettier and more pleased than usual since her Austin has his old friends about him; and I, leaning my elbow on the table and my chin upon my hand, am gazing with great admiration

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on Sir Sedley Beaudesert.

Oh, rare specimen of a race fast decaying,—specimen of the true fine gentleman, ere the word "dandy" was known, and before "exquisite" became a noun substantive,—let me here pause to describe thee! Sir Sedley Beaudesert was the contemporary of Trevanion and my father; but without affecting to be young, he still seemed so. Dress, tone, look, manner,—all were young; yet all had a certain dignity which does not belong to youth. At the age of five and twenty he had won what would have been fame to a French marquis of the old regime; namely, the reputation of being "the most charming man of his day,"—the most popular of our sex, the most favored, my dear lady-reader, by yours. It is a mistake, I believe, to suppose that it does not require talent to become the fashion,—at all events, Sir Sedley was the fashion, and he had talent.

He had travelled much, he had read much,—especially in memoirs, history, and belles-lettres,—he made verses with grace and a certain originality of easy wit and courtly sentiment, he conversed delightfully, he was polished and urbane in manner, he was brave and honorable in conduct; in words he could flatter, in deeds he was sincere.

Sir Sedley Beaudesert had never married. Whatever his years, he was still young enough in looks to be married for love. He was high-born, he was rich, he was, as I have said, popular; yet on his fair features there was an expression of melancholy, and on that forehead—pure from the lines of ambition, and free from the weight of study—there was the shadow of unmistakable regret.

"I don't know that," said my father; "I have never yet found in life one man who made happiness his end and aim. One wants to gain a fortune, another to spend it; one to get a place, another to build a name: but they all know very well that it is not happiness they search for. No Utilitarian was ever actuated by self-interest, poor man, when he sat down to scribble his unpopular crotchets to prove self-interest universal. And as to that notable distinction between self-interest vulgar and self-interest enlightened, the more the self-interest is enlightened, the less we are influenced by it. If you tell the young man who has just written a fine book or made a fine speech that he will not be any happier if he attain to the fame of Milton or the power of Pitt, and that, for the sake of his own happiness, he had much better cultivate a farm, live in the country, and postpone to the last the days of dyspepsia and gout, he will answer you fairly, 'I am quite as sensible of that as you are. But I am not thinking whether or not I shall be happy. I have made up my mind to be, if I can, a great author or a prime minister.' So it is with all the active sons of the world. To push on is the law of Nature. And you can no more say to men and to nations than to children: 'Sit still, and don't wear out your shoes!'"

"Then," said Trevanion, "if I tell you I am not happy, your only answer

is that I obey an inevitable law.”

”No, I don’t say that it is an inevitable law that man should not be happy; but it is an inevitable law that a man, in spite of himself, should live for something higher than his own happiness. He cannot live in himself or for himself, however egotistical he may try to be. Every desire he has links him with others. Man is not a machine,—he is a part of one.”

”True, brother, he is a soldier, not an army,” said Captain Roland.

”Life is a drama, not a monologue,” pursued my father. ”’Drama’ is derived from a Greek verb signifying ’to do.’ Every actor in the drama has something to do, which helps on the progress of the whole: that is the object for which the author created him. Do your part, and let the Great Play get on.”

”Ah!” said Trevanion, briskly, ”but to do the part is the difficulty. Every actor helps to the catastrophe, and yet must do his part without knowing how all is to end. Shall he help the curtain to fall on a tragedy or a comedy? Come, I will tell you the one secret of my public life, that which explains all its failure (for, in spite of my position, I have failed) and its regrets,—I want Conviction!”

”Exactly,” said my father; ”because to every question there are two sides, and you look at them both.”

”You have said it,” answered Trevanion, smiling also. ”For public life a man should be one-sided: he must act with a party; and a party insists that the shield is silver, when, if it will take the trouble to turn the corner, it will see that the reverse of the shield is gold. Woe to the man who makes that discovery alone, while his party are still swearing the shield is silver, and that not once in his life, but every night!

”You have said quite enough to convince me that you ought not to belong to a party, but not enough to convince me why you should not be happy,” said my father.

”Do you remember,” said Sir Sedley Beaudesert, ”an anecdote of the first Duke of Portland? He had a gallery in the great stable of his villa in Holland, where a concert was given once a week, to cheer and amuse his horses! I have no doubt the horses thrived all the better for it. What Trevanion wants is a concert once a week. With him it is always saddle and spur. Yet, after all, who would not envy him? If life be a drama, his name stands high in the play-bill, and is printed in capitals on the walls.”

”Envy me!” said Trevanion,—”Me! No, you are the enviable man,—you, who have only one grief in the world, and that so absurd a one that I will make you blush by disclosing it. Hear, O sage Austin! O sturdy

Roland! Olivares was haunted by a spectre, and Sedley Beaudesert by the dread of old age!"

"Well," said my mother, seriously, "I do think it requires a great sense of religion, or at all events children' of one's own, in whom one is young again, to reconcile oneself to becoming old."

"My dear ma'am," said Sir Sedley, who had slightly colored at Trevanion's charge, but had now recovered his easy self-possession, "you have spoken so admirably that you give me courage to confess my weakness. I do dread to be old. All the joys of my life have been the joys of youth. I have had so exquisite a pleasure in the mere sense of living that old age, as it comes near, terrifies me by its dull eyes and gray hairs. I have lived the life of a butterfly. Summer is over, and I see my flowers withering; and my wings are chilled by the first airs of winter. Yes, I envy Trevanion; for in public life no man is ever young, and while he can work he is never old."

"My dear Beaudesert," said my father, "when Saint Amable, patron saint of Riom, in Auvergne, went to Rome, the sun waited upon him as a servant, carried his cloak and gloves for him in the heat, and kept off the rain, if the weather changed, like an umbrella. You want to put the sun to the same use you are quite right; but then, you see, you must first be a saint before you can be sure of the sun as a servant."

Sir Sedley smiled charmingly; but the smile changed to a sigh as he added, "I don't think I should much mind being a saint, if the sun would be my sentinel instead of my courier. I want nothing of him but to stand still. You see he moved even for Saint Amable. My dear madam, you and I understand each other; and it is a very hard thing to grow old, do what one will to keep young."

"What say you, Roland, of these two malcontents?" asked my father. The Captain turned uneasily in his chair, for the rheumatism was gnawing his shoulder, and sharp pains were shooting through his mutilated limb.

"I say," answered Roland, "that these men are wearied with marching from Brentford to Windsor,—that they have never known the bivouac and the battle."

Both the grumblers turned their eyes to the veteran: the eyes rested first on the furrowed, care-worn lines in his eagle face; then they fell on the stiff outstretched cork limb; and then they turned away.

Meanwhile my mother had softly risen, and under pretence of looking for her work on the table near him, bent over the old soldier and pressed his hand.

"Gentlemen," said my father, "I don't think my brother ever heard of Nichocorus, the Greek comic writer; yet he has illustrated him very

ably. Saith Nichocorus, 'The best cure for drunkenness is a sudden calamity.' For chronic drunkenness, a continued course of real misfortune must be very salutary!"

No answer came from the two complainants; and my father took up a great book.

CHAPTER II.

"Mr friends," said my father, looking up from his book, and addressing himself to his two visitors, know of one thing, milder than calamity, that would do you both a great deal of good."

"What is that?" asked Sir Sedley.

"A saffron bag, worn at the pit of the stomach!"

"Austin, my dear," said my mother, reprovingly.

My father did not heed the interruption, but continued gravely: "Nothing is better for the spirits! Roland is in no want of saffron, because he is a warrior; and the desire of fighting and the hope of victory infuse such a heat into the spirits as is profitable for long life, and keeps up the system."

"Tut!" said Trevanion.

"But gentlemen in your predicament must have recourse to artificial means. Nitre in broth, for instance,—about three grains to ten (cattle fed upon nitre grow fat); or earthy odors,—such as exist in cucumbers and cabbage. A certain great lord had a clod of fresh earth, laid in a napkin, put under his nose every morning after sleep. Light anointing of the head with oil, mixed with roses and salt, is not bade but, upon the whole, I prescribe the saffron bag at the—"

"Sisty, my dear, will you look for my scissors?" said my mother.

"What nonsense are you talking! Question! question!" cried Mr. Trevanion.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed my father, opening his eyes: "I am giving you the advice of Lord Bacon. You want conviction: conviction comes from passion; passion from the spirits; spirits from a saffron bag. You, Beaudesert, on the other hand, want to keep youth. He keeps youth longest, who lives longest. Nothing more conduces to longevity than a saffron bag, provided always it is worn at the—"

"Sisty, my thimble!" said my mother.

"You laugh at us justly," said Beaudesert, smiling; "and the same remedy, I dare say, would cure us both."

"Yes," said my father, "there is no doubt of that. In the pit of the stomach is that great central web of nerves called the ganglions; thence they affect the head and the heart. Mr. Squills proved that to us, Sisty."

"Yes," said I; "but I never heard Mr. Squills talk of a saffron bag."

"Oh, foolish boy! it is not the saffron bag, it is the belief in the saffron bag. Apply Belief to the centre of the nerves, and all will go well," said my father.

CHAPTER III.

"But it is a devil of a thing to have too nice a conscience!" quoth the member of parliament.

"And it is not an angel of a thing to lose one's front teeth!" sighed the fine gentleman.

Therewith my father rose, and putting his hand into his waistcoat, more suo, delivered his famous Sermon Upon The Connection Between Faith And Purpose.

Famous it was in our domestic circle, but as yet it has not gone beyond; and since the reader, I am sure, does not turn to the Caxton Memoirs with the expectation of finding sermons, so to that circle let its fame be circumscribed. All I shall say about it is that it was a very fine sermon, and that it proved indisputably—to me at least—the salubrious effects of a saffron bag applied to the great centre of the nervous system. But the wise Ali saith that "a fool doth not know what maketh him look little, neither will he hearken to him that adviseth him." I cannot assert that my father's friends were fools, but they certainly came under this definition of Folly.

CHAPTER IV.

For therewith arose, not conviction, but discussion; Trevanion was logical, Beaudesert sentimental. My father held firm to the saffron bag. When James the First dedicated to the Duke of Buckingham his meditation on the Lord's Prayer, he gave a very sensible reason for selecting his Grace for that honor; "For," saith the king, "it is made upon a very short and plain prayer, and, therefore, the fitter for a courtier, for courtiers are for the most part thought neither to have lust nor leisure to say long prayers, liking best courte messe et long disner." I suppose it was for a similar reason that my father persisted in dedicating to the member of parliament and the fine gentleman "this short and plaine" morality of his,—to wit, the saffron bag. He was evidently persuaded, if he could once get them to apply that, it was all that was needful; that they had neither lust nor leisure for longer instructions. And this saffron bag,—it came down with such a whack, at every round in the argument! You would have thought my father one of the old plebeian combatants in the popular ordeal, who, forbidden to use sword and lance, fought with a sand-bag tied to a flail: a very stunning weapon it was when filled only with sand; but a bag filled with saffron, it was irresistible! Though my father had two to one against him, they could not stand such a deuce of a weapon. And after tats and pishes innumerable from Mr. Trevanion, and sundry bland grimaces from Sir Sedley Beaudesert, they fairly gave in, though they would not own they were beaten.

"Enough," said the member, "I see that you don't comprehend me; I must continue to move by my own impulse."

My father's pet book was the Colloquies of Erasmus; he was wont to say that those Colloquies furnished life with illustrations in every page. Out of the Colloquies of Erasmus he now answered the member.

"Rabirius, wanting his servant Syrus to get up," quoth my father, "cried out to him to move. 'I do move,' said Syrus. 'I see you move,' replied Rabirius, 'but you move nothing.' To return to the saffron bag—"

"Confound the saffron bag!" cried Trevanion, in a rage; and then softening his look as he drew on his gloves, he turned to my mother and said, with more politeness than was natural to, or at least customary with, him,—

"By the way, my dear Mrs. Caxton, I should tell you that Lady Ellinor comes to town to-morrow on purpose to call on you. We shall be here some little time, Austin; and though London is so empty, there are still some persons of note to whom I should like to introduce you and yours—"

"Nay," said my father; "your world and my world are not the same. Books

for me, and men for you. Neither Kitty nor I can change our habits, even for friendship: she has a great piece of work to finish, and so have I. Mountains cannot stir, especially when in labor; but Mahomet can come to the mountain as often as he likes."

Mr. Trevanion insisted, and Sir Sedley Beaudesert mildly put in his own claims; both boasted acquaintance with literary men whom my father would, at all events, be pleased to meet. My father doubted whether he could meet any literary men more eloquent than Cicero, or more amusing than Aristophanes; and observed that if such did exist, he would rather meet them in their books than in a drawing-room. In fine, he—was immovable; and so also, with less argument, was Captain Roland.

Then Mr. Trevanion turned to me.

"Your son, at all events, should see something of the world."

My mother's soft eye sparkled.

"My dear friend, I thank you," said my father, touched; "and Pisistratus and I will talk it over."

Our guests had departed. All four of us gathered to the open window, and enjoyed in silence the cool air and the moonlight.

"Austin," said my mother at last, "I fear it is for my sake that you refuse going amongst your old friends: you knew I should be frightened by such fine people, and—"

"And we have been happy for more than eighteen years without them, Kitty! My poor friends are not happy, and we are. To leave well alone is a golden rule worth all in Pythagoras. The ladies of Bubastis, my dear,—a place in Egypt where the cat was worshipped,—always kept rigidly aloof from the gentlemen in Athribis, who adored the shrew-mice. Cats are domestic animals, your shrew-mice are sad gadabouts: you can't find a better model, any Kitty, than the ladies of Bubastis!"

"How Trevanion is altered!" said Roland, musingly,—"he who was so lively and ardent!"

"He ran too fast up-hill at first, and has been out of breath ever since," said my father.

"And Lady Ellinor," said Roland, hesitatingly, "shall you see her tomorrow?"

"Yes!" said my father, calmly.

As Captain Roland spoke, something in the tone of his question seemed to flash a conviction on my mother's heart, the woman there was quick; she

drew back, turning pale even in the moonlight, and fixed her eyes on my father, while I felt her hand, which had clasped mine, tremble convulsively.

I understood her. Yes, this Lady Ellinor was the early rival whose name till then she had not known. She fixed her eyes on my father; and at his tranquil tone and quiet look she breathed more freely, and, sliding her hand from mine, rested it fondly on his shoulder. A few moments afterwards, I and Captain Roland found ourselves standing alone by the window.

"You are young, nephew," said the Captain, "and you have the name of a fallen family to raise. Your father does well not to reject for you that opening into the great world which Trevanion offers. As for me, my business in London seems over: I cannot find what I came to seek. I have sent for my daughter; when she arrives I shall return to my old tower, and the man and the ruin will crumble away together."

"Tush, uncle! I must work hard and get money; and then we will repair the old tower and buy back the old estate. My father shall sell the red brick house; we will fit him up a library in the keep; and we will all live united, in peace, and in state, as grand as our ancestors before us."

While I thus spoke, my uncle's eyes were fixed upon a corner of the street, where a figure, half in shade, half in moonlight, stood motionless. "Ah!" said I, following his eye, "I have observed that man two or three times pass up and down the street on the other side of the way and turn his head towards our window. Our guests were with us then, and my father in full discourse, or I should have—"

Before I could finish the sentence my uncle, stifling an exclamation, broke away, hurried out of the room, stumped down the stairs, and was in the street, while I was yet rooted to the spot with surprise. I remained at the window, and my eye rested on the figure. I saw the Captain, with his bare head and his gray hair, cross the street; the figure started, turned the corner, and fled.

Then I followed my uncle, and arrived in time to save him from falling; he leant his head on my breast, and I heard him murmur: "It is he—it is he! He has watched us!—he repents!"

CHAPTER V.

The next day Lady Ellinor called; but, to my great disappointment, without Fanny.

Whether or not some joy at the incident of the previous night had served to rejuvenate my uncle, I know not, but he looked to me ten years younger when Lady Ellinor entered. How carefully the buttoned-up coat was brushed; how new and glossy was the black stock! The poor Captain was restored to his pride, and mighty proud he looked! with a glow on his cheek and a fire in his eye, his head thrown back, and his whole air composed, severe, Mavortian, and majestic, as if awaiting the charge of the French cuirassiers at the head of his detachment.

My father, on the contrary, was as usual (till dinner, when he always dressed punctiliously, out of respect to his Kitty), in his easy morning-gown and slippers; and nothing but a certain compression in his lips, which had lasted all the morning, evinced his anticipation of the visit, or the emotion it caused him.

Lady Ellinor behaved beautifully. She could not conceal a certain nervous trepidation when she first took the hand my father extended; and in touching rebuke of the Captain's stately bow, she held out to him the hand left disengaged, with a look which brought Roland at once to her side. It was a desertion of his colors to which nothing, short of Ney's shameful conduct at Napoleon's return from Elba, affords a parallel in history. Then, without waiting for introduction, and before a word indeed was said, Lady Ellinor came to my mother so cordially, so caressingly; she threw into her smile, voice, manner, such winning sweetness,—that I, intimately learned in my poor mother's simple, loving heart, wondered how she refrained from throwing her arms round Lady Ellinor's neck and kissing her outright. It must have been a great conquest over herself not to do it! My turn came next; and talking to me and about me soon set all parties at their ease,—at least apparently.

What was said, I cannot remember; I do not think one of us could. But an hour slipped away, and there was no gap in the conversation.

With curious interest, and a survey I strove to make impartial, I compared Lady Ellinor with my mother; and I comprehended the fascination which the high-born lady must, in their earlier youth, have exercised over both brothers, so dis-similar to each other. For charm was the characteristic of Lady Ellinor,—a charm indefinable. It was not the mere grace of refined breeding, though that went a great way, it was a charm that seemed to spring from natural sympathy. Whomsoever she addressed, that person appeared for the moment to engage all her attention, to interest her whole mind. She had a gift of conversation very peculiar. She made what she said like a continuation of what was said to her. She seemed as if she had entered into your thoughts, and talked them aloud. Her mind was evidently cultivated with great care, but she was perfectly void of pedantry. A hint, an allusion, sufficed to show how much she knew, to one well instructed, without mortifying or perplexing the ignorant. Yes, there probably was the only woman my

father had ever met who could be the companion to his mind, walk through the garden of knowledge by his side, and trim the flowers while he cleared the vistas. On the other hand, there was an inborn nobility in Lady Ellinor's sentiments that must have struck the most susceptible chord in Roland's nature, and the sentiments took eloquence from the look, the mien, the sweet dignity of the very turn of the head. Yes, she must have been a fitting Oriana to a young Amadis. It was not hard to see that Lady Ellinor was ambitious, that she had a love of fame for fame itself, that she was proud, that she set value (and that morbidly) on the world's opinion. This was perceptible when she spoke of her husband, even of her daughter. It seemed to me as if she valued the intellect of the one, the beauty of the other, by the gauge of the social distinction it conferred. She took measure of the gift as I was taught at Dr. Herman's to take measure of the height of a tower,—by the length of the shadow it cast upon the ground.

My dear father, with such a wife you would never have lived eighteen years shivering on the edge of a Great Book!

My dear uncle, with such a wife you would never have been contented with a cork leg and a Waterloo medal!

And I understand why Mr. Trevanion, "eager and ardent," as ye say he was in youth, with a heart bent on the practical success of life, won the hand of the heiress. Well, you see Mr. Trevanion has contrived not to be happy! By the side of my listening, admiring mother, with her blue eyes moist and her coral lips apart, Lady Ellinor looks faded. Was she ever as pretty as my mother is now? Never. But she was much handsomer. What delicacy in the outline, and yet how decided, in spite of the delicacy! The eyebrow so defined; the profile slightly aquiline, so clearly cut, with the curved nostril, which, if physiognomists are right, shows sensibility so keen; and the classic lip that, but for the neighboring dimple, would be so haughty. But wear and tear are in that face. The nervous, excitable temper has helped the fret and cark of ambitious life. My dear uncle, I know not yet your private life; but 'as for my father, I am sure that though he might have done more on earth, he would have been less fit for heaven, if he had married Lady Ellinor.

At last this visit—dreaded, I am sure, by three of the party—was over, but not before I had promised to dine at the Trevanions' that day.

When we were again alone, my father threw off a long breath, and looking round him cheerfully, said, "Since Pisistratus deserts us, let us console ourselves for his absence; send for brother Jack, and all four go down to Richmond to drink tea."

"Thank you, Austin," said Roland; "but I don't want it, I assure you."

"Upon your honor?" said my father, in a half whisper.

"Upon my honor."

"Nor I either. So, my dear Kitty, Roland and I will take a walk, and be back in time to see if that young Anachronism looks as handsome as his new London-made clothes will allow him. Properly speaking, he ought to go with an apple in his hand, and a dove in his bosom. But now I think of it, that was luckily not the fashion with the Athenians till the time of Alcibiades!"

CHAPTER VI.

You may judge of the effect that my dinner at Mr. Trevanion's, with a long conversation after it with Lady Ellinor, made upon my mind when, on my return home, after having satisfied all questions of parental curiosity, I said nervously, and looking down: "My dear father, I should like very much, if you have no objection—to-to—"

"What, my dear?" asked my father, kindly.

"Accept an offer Lady Ellinor has made me on the part of Mr. Trevanion. He wants a secretary. He is kind enough to excuse my inexperience, and declares I shall do very well, and can soon get into his ways. Lady Ellinor says," I continued with dignity, "that it will be a great opening in public life for me; and at all events, my dear father, I shall see much of the world, and learn what I really think will be more useful to me than anything they will teach him at college."

My mother looked anxiously at my father. "It will indeed be a great thing for Sisty," said she, timidly; and then, taking courage, she added—"and that is just the sort of life he is formed for."

"Hem!" said my uncle.

My father rubbed his spectacles thoughtfully, and replied, after a long pause,—

"You may be right, Kitty: I don't think Pisistratus is meant for study; action will suit him better. But what does this office lead to?"

"Public employment, sir," said I, boldly; "the service of my country."

"If that be the case," quoth Roland, "have not a word to say. But I should have thought that for a lad of spirit, a descendant of the old De Caxtons, the army would have—"

"The army!" exclaimed my mother, clasping her hands, and looking involuntarily at my uncle's cork leg.

"The army!" repeated my father, peevishly. "Bless my soul, Roland, you seem to think man is made for nothing else but to be shot at! You would not like the army, Pisistratus?"

"Why, sir, not if it pained you and my dear mother; otherwise, indeed—"

"Papoe!" said my father, interrupting me. "This all comes of your giving the boy that ambitious, uncomfortable name, Mrs. Caxton; what could a Pisistratus be but the plague of one's life? That idea of serving his country is Pisistratus ipsissimus all over. If ever I have another son (*Dii metiora!*) he has only got to be called Eratostratus, and then he will be burning down St. Paul's,—which I believe was, by the way, first made out of the stones of a temple to Diana. Of the two, certainly, you had better serve your country with a goose-quill than by poking a bayonet into the ribs of some unfortunate Indian; I don't think there are any other people whom the service of one's country makes it necessary to kill just at present, eh, Roland?"

"It is a very fine field, India," said my uncle, sententiously; "it is the nursery of captains."

"Is it? Those plants take up a good deal of ground, then, that might be more profitably cultivated. And, indeed, considering that the tallest captains in the world will be ultimately set into a box not above seven feet at the longest, it is astonishing what a quantity of room that species of arbor mortis takes in the growing! However, Pisistratus, to return to your request, I will think it over, and talk to Trevanion."

"Or rather to Lady Ellinor," said I, imprudently: my mother slightly shivered, and took her hand from mine. I felt cut to the heart by the slip of my own tongue.

"That, I think, your mother could do best," said my father, dryly, "if she wants to be quite convinced that somebody will see that your shirts are aired. For I suppose they mean you to lodge at Trevanion's."

"Oh, no!" cried my mother; "he might as well go to college then. I thought he was to stay with us,—only go in the morning, but, of course, sleep here."

"If I know anything of Trevanion," said my father, "his secretary will be expected to do without sleep. Poor boy! you don't know what it is you desire. And yet, at your age, I—" my father stopped short. "No!" he renewed abruptly, after a long silence, and as if soliloquizing,— "no; man is never wrong while he lives for others. The philosopher who contemplates from the rock is a less noble image than the sailor who struggles with the storm. Why should there be two of us? And could he

be an alter ego, even if I wished it? Impossible!" My father turned on his chair, and laying the left leg on the right knee, said smilingly, as he bent down to look me full in the face: "But, Pisistratus, will you promise me always to wear the saffron bag?"

CHAPTER VII.

I now make a long stride in my narrative. I am domesticated with the Trevanions. A very short conversation with the statesman sufficed to decide my father; and the pith of it lay in this single sentence uttered by Trevanion: "I promise you one thing,—he shall never be idle!"

Looking back, I am convinced that my father was right, and that he understood my character, and the temptations to which I was most prone, when he consented to let me resign college and enter thus prematurely on the world of men. I was naturally so joyous that I should have made college life a holiday, and then, in repentance, worked myself into a phthisis.

And my father, too, was right that though I could study, I was not meant for a student.

After all, the thing was an experiment. I had time to spare; if the experiment failed, a year's delay would not necessarily be a year's loss.

I am ensconced, then, at Mr. Trevanion's; I have been there some months. It is late in the winter; Parliament and the season have commenced. I work hard,—Heaven knows, harder than I should have worked at college. Take a day for sample.

Trevanion gets up at eight o'clock, and in all-weather rides an hour before breakfast; at nine he takes that meal in his wife's dressing-room; at half-past nine he comes into his study. By that time he expects to find done by his secretary the work I am about to describe.

On coming home,—or rather before going to bed, which is usually after three o'clock,—it is Mr. Trevanion's habit to leave on the table of the said study a list of directions for the secretary. The following, which I take at random from many I have preserved, may show their multifarious nature:—

1. Look out in the Reports (Committee, House of Lords) for the last seven years all that is said about the growth of flax; mark the passages for me.

2. Do, do. "Irish Emigration."
3. Hunt out second volume of Kames's "History of Man," passage containing Reid's Logic,—don't know where the book is!
4. How does the line beginning Lumina conjurent, inter something, end? Is it in Grey? See.
5. Fracastorius writes: Quantum hoe infecit vitium, quot adiverit urbes. Query, ought it not, in strict grammar, to be injecerit, instead of infecit? If you don't know, write to father.
6. Write the four letters in full from the notes I leave; i. e., about the Ecclesiastical Courts.
7. Look out Population Returns: strike average of last five years (between mortality and births) in Devonshire and Lancashire.
8. Answer these six begging letters "No,"—civilly.
9. The other six, to constituents, "that I have no interest with Government."
10. See, if you have time, whether any of the new books on the round table are not trash.
11. I want to know All about Indian corn.
12. Longinus says something, somewhere, in regret for uncongenial pursuits (public life, I suppose): what is it? N. B. Longinus is not in my London catalogue, but is here, I know,—I think in a box in the lumber-room.
13. Set right the calculation I leave on the poor-rates. I have made a blunder somewhere, etc.

Certainly my father knew Mr. Trevanion; he never expected a secretary to sleep! To get through the work required of me by half-past nine, I get up by candle-light. At half-past nine I am still hunting for Longinus, when Mr. Trevanion comes in with a bundle of letters.

Answers to half the said letters fall to my share. Directions verbal,—in a species of short-hand talk. While I write, Mr. Trevanion reads the newspapers, examines what I have done, makes notes therefrom,—some for Parliament, some for conversation, some for correspondence,—skims over the Parliamentary papers of the morning, and jots down directions for extracting, abridging, and comparing them with others, perhaps twenty years old. At eleven he walks down to a Committee of the House of Commons,—leaving me plenty to do,—till half-past three, when he returns. At four, Fanny puts her head into the room—and I lose mine.

Four days in the week Mr. Trevanion then disappears for the rest of the day; dines at Bellamy's or a club; expects me at the House at eight o'clock, in case he thinks of something, wants a fact or a quotation. He then releases me,—generally with a fresh list of instructions. But I have my holidays, nevertheless. On Wednesdays and Saturdays Mr. Trevanion gives dinners, and I meet the most eminent men of the day, on both sides; for Trevanion is on both sides himself,—or no side at all, which comes to the same thing. On Tuesdays Lady Ellinor gives me a ticket for the Opera, and I get there at least in time for the ballet. I have already invitations enough to balls and soirees, for I am regarded as an only son of great expectations. I am treated as becomes a Caxton who has the right, if he pleases, to put a De before his name. I have grown very smart. I have taken a passion for dress,—natural to eighteen. I like everything I do, and every one about me. I am over head and ears in love with Fanny Trevanion, who breaks my heart, nevertheless; for she flirts with two peers, a life-guardsman, three old members of Parliament, Sir Sedley Beaudesert, one ambassador and all his attaches and positively (the audacious minx!) with a bishop, in full wig and apron, who, people say, means to marry again.

Pisistratus has lost color and flesh. His mother says he is very much improved,—that he takes to be the natural effect produced by Stultz and Hoby. Uncle Jack says he is "fined down." His father looks at him and writes to Trevanion,—

"Dear T.—I refused a salary for my son. Give him a horse, and two hours a day to ride it. Yours, A. C."

The next day I am master of a pretty bay mare, and riding by the side of Fanny Trevanion. Alas! alas!

CHAPTER VIII.

I have not mentioned my Uncle Roland. He is gone—abroad—to fetch his daughter. He has stayed longer than was expected. Does he seek his son still,—there as here? My father has finished the first portion of his work, in two great volumes. Uncle Jack, who for some time has been looking melancholy, and who now seldom stirs out, except on Sundays (on which days we all meet at my father's and dine together),—Uncle Jack, I say, has undertaken to sell it.

"Don't be over-sanguine," says Uncle Jack, as he locks up the MS. in two red boxes with a slit in the lids, which belonged to one of the defunct companies. "Don't be over-sanguine as to the price. These publishers never venture much on a first experiment. They must be talked even into looking at the book."

"Oh!" said my father, "if they will publish it at all, and at their own risk, I should not stand out for any other terms. 'Nothing great,' said Dryden, 'ever came from a venal pen!'"

"An uncommonly foolish observation of Dryden's," returned Uncle Jack; "he ought to have known better."

"So he did," said I, "for he used his pen to fill his pockets, poor man!"

"But the pen was not venal, Master Anachronism," said my father. "A baker is not to be called venal if he sells his loaves, he is venal if he sells himself; Dryden only sold his loaves."

"And we must sell yours," said Uncle Jack, emphatically. "A thousand pounds a volume will be about the mark, eh?"

"A thousand pounds a volume!" cried my father. "Gibbon, I fancy, did not receive more."

"Very likely; Gibbon had not an Uncle Jack to look after his interests," said Mr. Tibbets, laughing, and rubbing those smooth hands of his. "No! two thousand pounds the two volumes,—a sacrifice, but still I recommend moderation."

"I should be happy indeed if the book brought in anything," said my father, evidently fascinated; "for that young gentleman is rather expensive. And you, my dear Jack,—perhaps half the sum may be of use to you!"

"To me! my dear brother," cried Uncle Jack "to me! Why when my new speculation has succeeded, I shall be a millionaire!"

"Have you a new speculation, uncle?" said I, anxiously. "What is it?"

"Mum!" said my uncle, putting his finger to his lip, and looking all round the room; "Mum! Mum!"

Pisistratus.—"A Grand National Company for blowing up both Houses of Parliament!"

Mr. Caxton.—"Upon my life, I hope something newer than that; for they, to judge by the newspapers, don't want brother Jack's assistance to blow up each other!"

Uncle Jack (mysteriously).—"Newspapers! you don't often read a newspaper, Austin Caxton!"

Mr. Caxton.—"Granted, John Tibbets!"

Uncle Jack.—"But if my speculation make you read a newspaper every day?"

Mr. Caxton (astounded).—"Make me read a newspaper every day!"

Uncle Jack (warming, and expanding his hands to the fire).—"As big as the 'Times'!"

Mr. Caxton (uneasily).—"Jack, you alarm me!"

Uncle Jack.—"And make you write in it too,—a leader!"

Mr. Caxton, pushing back his chair, seizes the only weapon at his command, and hurls at Uncle Jack a great sentence of Greek,—
". . . a quotation in Greek . . ." (1)

Uncle Jack (nothing daunted).—"Ay, and put as much Greek as you like into it!"

Mr. Caxton (relieved and softening). "My dear Jack, you are a great man; let us hear you!"

Then Uncle Jack began. Now, perhaps my readers may have remarked that this illustrious speculator was really fortunate in his ideas. His speculations in themselves always had something sound in the kernel, considering how barren they were in the fruit; and this it was that made him so dangerous. The idea Uncle Jack had now got hold of will, I am convinced, make a man's fortune one of these days; and I relate it with a sigh, in thinking how much has gone out of the family. Know, then, it was nothing less than setting up a daily paper, on the plan of the "Times," but devoted entirely to Art, Literature, and Science,—Mental Progress, in short; I say on the plan of the "Times," for it was to imitate the mighty machinery of that diurnal illuminator. It was to be the Literary Salmoneus of the Political Jupiter, and rattle its thunder over the bridge of knowledge. It was to have correspondents in all parts of the globe; everything that related to the chronicle of the mind, from the labor of the missionary in the South Sea Islands, or the research of a traveller in pursuit of that mirage called Timbuctoo, to the last new novel at Paris, or the last great emendation of a Greek particle at a German university, was to find a place in this focus of light. It was to amuse, to instruct, to interest,—there was nothing it was not to do. Not a man in the whole reading public, not only of the three kingdoms, not only of the British empire, but under the cope of heaven, that it was not to touch somewhere, in head, in heart, or in pocket. The most crotchety member of the intellectual community might find his own hobby in those stables.

"Think," cried Uncle Jack,—"think of the march of mind; think of the

passion for cheap knowledge; think how little quarterly, monthly, weekly journals can keep pace with the main wants of the age! As well have a weekly journal on politics as a weekly journal on all the matters still more interesting than politics to the mass of the public. My 'Literary Times' once started, people will wonder how they had ever lived without it! Sir, they have not lived without it,—they have vegetated; they have lived in holes and caves, like the Troggedikes."

"Troglodytes," said my father, mildly,— "from trogle, 'a cave,' and dumi, 'to go under.' They lived in Ethiopia, and had their wives in common."

"As to the last point, I don't say that the public, poor creatures, are as bad as that," said Uncle Jack, candidly; "but no simile holds good in all its points. And the public are no less Troggedummies, or whatever you call them, compared with what they will be when living under the full light of my 'Literary Times.' Sir, it will be a revolution in the world. It will bring literature out of the clouds into the parlor, the cottage, the kitchen. The idlest dandy, the finest fine lady, will find something to her taste; the busiest man of the mart and counter will find some acquisition to his practical knowledge. The practical man will see the progress of divinity, medicine, nay, even law. Sir, the Indian will read me under the banyan; I shall be in the seraglios of the East; and over my sheets the American Indian will smoke the calumet of peace. We shall reduce politics to its proper level in the affairs of life; raise literature to its due place in the thoughts and business of men. It is a grand thought, and my heart swells with pride while I contemplate it!"

"My dear Jack," said my father, seriously, and rising with emotion, "it is a grand thought, and I honor you for it. You are quite right,—it would be a revolution! It would educate mankind insensibly. Upon my life, I should be proud to write a leader, or a paragraph. Jack, you will immortalize yourself!"

"I believe I shall," said Uncle Jack, modestly; "but I have not said a word yet on the greatest attraction of all."

"Ah! and that?"

"The Advertisements!" cried my uncle, spreading his hands, with all the fingers at angles, like the threads of a spider's web. "The advertisements—oh, think of them!—a perfect El Dorado. The advertisements, sir, on the most moderate calculation, will bring us in L50,000 a year. My dear Pisistratus, I shall never marry; you are my heir. Embrace me!"

So saying, my Uncle Jack threw himself upon me, and squeezed out of breath the prudential demur that was rising to my lips.

My poor mother, between laughing and sobbing, faltered out:

"And it is my brother who will pay back to his son all—he gave up for me!"

While my father walked to and fro the room, more excited than ever I saw him before, muttering, "A sad, useless dog I have been hitherto! I should like to serve the world! I should indeed!"

Uncle Jack had fairly done it this time. He had found out the only bait in the world to catch so shy a carp as my father,—haaret letalis arundo. I saw that the deadly hook was within an inch of my father's nose, and that he was gazing at it with a fixed determination to swallow.

But if it amused my father? Boy that I was, I saw no further. I must own I myself was dazzled, and, perhaps with childlike malice, delighted at the perturbation of my betters. The young carp was pleased to see the waters so playfully in movement when the old carp waved his tail and swayed himself on his fins.

"Mum!" said Uncle Jack, releasing me; "not a word to Mr. Trevanion, to any one."

"But why?"

"Why? God bless my soul. Why? If my scheme gets wind, do you suppose some one will not clap on sail to be before me? You frighten me out of my senses. Promise me faithfully to be silent as the grave."

"I should like to hear Trevanion's opinion too."

"As well hear the town-crier! Sir, I have trusted to your honor. Sir, at the domestic hearth all secrets are sacred. Sir, I—"

"My dear Uncle Jack, you have said quite enough. Not a word will I breathe!"

"I'm sure you may trust him, Jack," said my mother.

"And I do trust him,—with wealth untold," replied my uncle. "May I ask you for a little water—with a trifle of brandy in it—and a biscuit, or indeed a sandwich. This talking makes me quite hungry."

My eye fell upon Uncle Jack as he spoke. Poor Uncle Jack, he had grown thin!

(1) "Some were so barbarous as to eat their own species." The sentence refers to the Scythians, and is in Strabo. I mention the authority, for Strabo is not an author that any man engaged on a less work than the

"History of Human Error" is expected to have by heart.