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Harriet Martineau, *Illustrations of Taxation (1. The Park and the Paddock, 2. The Haycock, 3. The Jerseymen Meeting, 4. The Jerseymen Parting, 5. The Scholars of Arneside)* [1834]



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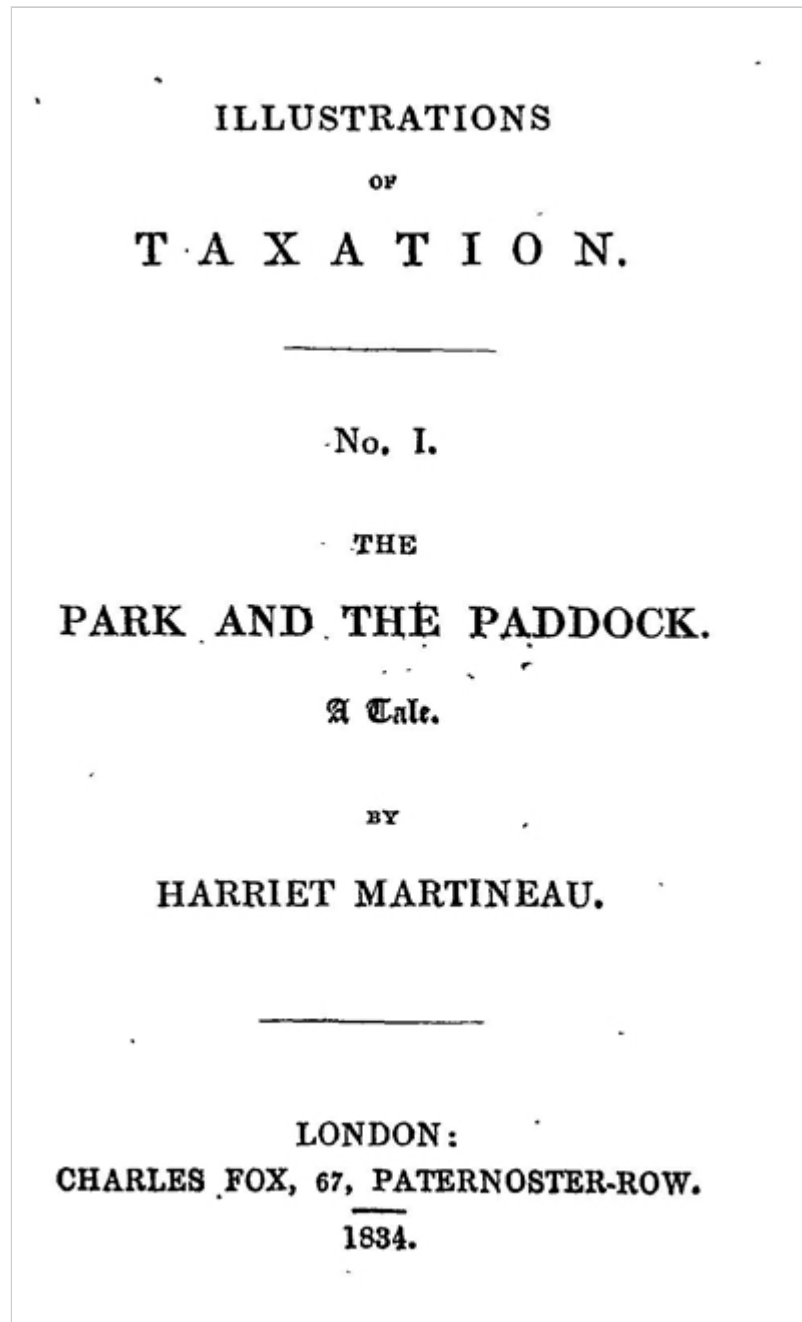
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Online Library of Liberty: Illustrations of Taxation (1. The Park and the Paddock, 2. The Haycock, 3. The Jerseymen Meeting, 4. The Jerseymen Parting, 5. The Scholars of Arneside)

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Martineau continues her popularization of economic ideas which began with the *Illustrations of Political Economy* in this series of “Tales” addressed to the working class.

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CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
1. Perambulation	1
2. Interlocutory Decrees	14
3. Intrusion	31
4. Heresy	55
5. Extortion	68
6. Commutation	88
7. Dimission	112
8. Benefit of Clergy	136

Table Of Contents

[The Park and the Paddock.](#)
[Chapter I.: Pride of Patrimony.](#)
[Chapter II.: Patrimonial Appendages.](#)
[Chapter III.: Clerical Duty.](#)
[Chapter IV.: Clerical Recreations.](#)
[Chapter V.: Vowed Sisterhood.](#)
[Chapter VI.: Battles At Navarino.](#)
[Chapter VII.: Lounging and Listening.](#)
[Chapter VIII.: Characteristics.](#)
[The Tenth Haycock.](#)
[Chapter I.: Perambulation.](#)
[Chapter II.: Interlocutory Decrees.](#)
[Chapter III.: Intrusion.](#)
[Chapter IV.: Heresy.](#)
[Chapter V.: Extortion.](#)
[Chapter VI.: Commutation.](#)
[Chapter VII.: Dimission.](#)
[Chapter VIII.: Benefit of Clergy.](#)
[The Jerseymen Meeting.](#)
[Chapter I.: A Phenomenon.](#)
[Chapter II.: A Legacy.](#)
[Chapter III.: Life In Lambeth.](#)
[Chapter IV.: The Phenomenon Again.](#)
[Chapter V.: An Economical Project.](#)
[Chapter VI.: Lessons In Loyalty.](#)
[Chapter VII.: Harder Lessons In Loyalty.](#)
[The Jerseymen Parting.](#)
[Chapter I.: A Busy Man At Leisure.](#)
[Chapter II.: Knitting and Unravelling.](#)
[Chapter III.: A Mate For Mother Hubbard.](#)
[Chapter IV.: Friend Or Foe?](#)
[Chapter V.: The Darkening Hour.](#)
[Chapter VI.: The Land of Signals.](#)
[Chapter VII.: Welcome to Supper.](#)
[Chapter VIII.: A Wanderer Still.](#)
[The Scholars of Arneside.: Preface.](#)
[Chapter I.: The Mysteries of Wisdom.](#)
[Chapter II.: Maternal Anticipations.](#)
[Chapter III.: Lessons On the Hills.](#)
[Chapter IV.: Signs In the Sky.](#)
[Chapter V.: Owen and X.Y.Z.](#)
[Chapter VI.: Press and Post-office.](#)
[Chapter VII.: The Policy of Mps.](#)
[Chapter VIII.: Family Secrets.](#)

[Chapter IX.: The Mysteries Laid Open.](#)

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[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

THE PARK AND THE PADDOCK.

Chapter I.

PRIDE OF PATRIMONY.

The inhabitants of the town of A— were divided in opinion as to whether they ought to be thankful or not for the new road having been brought within a quarter of a mile of their market-place. There were traditions, in the memories of the old people, of their town having once been a place of considerable importance; and a few vestiges of such importance remained to gratify the pride, and fill up the spare hours of two or three antiquarians within its bounds. The old people and these antiquarians agreed in trembling for the fate of their beloved carved gateways and projecting fronts of houses, amidst the brick edifices which were springing up in the neighbourhood, and the new incentives to improvement which had arisen; but they granted that every townsman ought to wish for the increase of his native place in consequence and wealth. There were some who already began to look contemptuously on the streets of low, rambling houses, amidst which their days had been passed, and to expend all their love and admiration on the new inn which flared upon the scarce-finished road, and the sets of red “lodges,” “villas,” and “cottages,” which stood in patches on the western outskirts of the town. The builders of the place, of course, spoke much in praise of improvement, and those whose house-property stood in the half empty streets on the eastern side of A— had no less to say against innovation. There was little dispute, meanwhile, on one point: that the town had always suffered from its being in the centre of a fine sporting country. The dwellings of the gentry were, almost without exception, situated at some distance among the moors or the fells. Even the physicians’ and lawyers’ houses stood by themselves—in gardens or surrounded by walls—in emulation of the mansions and shooting-boxes which might be seen from the church tower; so that this church tower, and the blue slates of a few meeting-houses rose from amidst a congregation of tradesmen’s dwellings. The large old inn, the Turk’s Head, was almost the only handsome house of any respectable age. The town was thought to suffer much in the estimation of strangers from this deficiency; and the inhabitants became the more sensible of it, the more strangers were brought to cast a passing glance upon the place from the new road, or to make a note of what they saw from the balcony of the modern inn, the Navarino, while waiting for horses.

A party of strangers arrived one day, whose opinion of the town was of some consequence, as it might determine or prevent their residence in the neighbourhood. They did not stop either at the Turk’s Head or at the Navarino, but only for two minutes to inquire for the steward of Fellbrow Park, who was found to have preceded the party to their destination. News had circulated for some days past of the arrival of a letter from young Mr. Cranston, declaring his intention of coming to throw open the house, and to examine the estate which had been deserted by his father for many years before his death. The steward was desired not to draw a nail from the gates; and to

make no further preparation for the arrival of the heir than having workmen ready to open a way for him into his own court-yard.

Mr. Cranston, the elder, had taken a disgust to this abode, and quitted it on the death of his lady, sixteen years ago. Before he drove away, carrying with him his three little boys and his infant daughter, he superintended the extraordinary ceremony of nailing iron plates over the gates of the court-yard, and took effectual care that no part of the old-fashioned wall which surrounded the house should be left in a state to tempt foot to climb, or eye to look over it. His last charge to his steward had been to see that not a tree was planted or felled,—not so much as a weed pulled up, till further orders. The fish were to be undisturbed in their ponds, and the game in their covers. All the servants left behind were to be sinecurists till a change of policy or of administration should arrive. Till the news of Mr. Cranston's death, all these directions had been complied with, except in as far as certain instances of connivance might be regarded as breach of orders. If a few aged neighbours were seen now and then helping themselves with firewood from the thickets, and a youth might be descried from afar stealing towards the ponds, or the gamekeeper occasionally found certain of his charge fluttering in springes, no notice was taken, and no remorse followed, as it was decided that both ponds and covers remained as much overstocked as the owner could possibly desire. The first change of management took place when the approach of young Mr. Cranston was announced. The steward was grieved at the thought that the heir should see his estate in so desolate a condition, and took the liberty,—not to fell trees,—but to clear away underwood, and weed and new-gravel the walks which led from the entrance of the park to the house. A little mowing of the grass, and trimming of some patches near the house which were once flower-beds, further improved the aspect of the place, so as to destroy all anticipation of what the family was likely to see within doors.

When the carriages stopped at the park entrance, the steward appeared to pay his respects, and suggest that immediate orders should be sent to one or other of the inns, to provide that accommodation which it was impossible the house should afford. He must venture also to say that the young lady would not find the place fit for her to enter. It would really be better that she should not proceed this afternoon.

Mr. Cranston had been,—not stretched out at length, for no carriage could thus accommodate his length of limb,—but leaning back, reading, till the last moment. He seemed sorry to be roused, even by his arrival at his own estate, and to be greeted by his own steward.

“What do you think, Fanny?” said he to his sister, who was just emerging from a reverie beside him. “Perhaps you had better go back to the inn with Mrs. Day and Maynard till to-morrow.”

Mrs. Day, the respectable elderly personage who had never been exactly Fanny's nurse, and was now far from being her governess, ventured to say from her corner of the carriage that she really could not think of Fanny's proceeding to the house till she knew that it had been properly aired. She had been asking, for a week past, what

measures had been taken for this end; and could learn nothing that satisfied her that Fanny could go anywhere to-night but to the inn.

Fanny, meanwhile, had given orders to drive on; and before Mrs. Day had done speaking, the carriage was rolling on the gravel within the gates. If Richard had put away his book, and sat upright in preparation for what was approaching, it was not to be expected that she should turn back, she declared.

The phaeton which her brother James was driving had passed the carriage during the consultation with the steward; and Wallace, the youngest of the three brothers, might now be seen pointing out certain things that he perceived in the grass, and in the neighbouring coppice. James flourished his whip, and quickened the pace of his steeds. Their mirth communicated itself to Fanny, and she sprang forward with an exclamation of joy when the next turn of the road disclosed a splendid view, bathed in the sunshine of a bright autumnal afternoon. Mrs. Day had never been more out of love with these wild young people, (as she sometimes called them,) than at the present moment. She did not expect that they should remember the place, or her whose death had occasioned their quitting it; but she really thought that they might show themselves more sensible of what had happened there. Some thought of their parents might be suggested by the scene, which should sober their spirits a little. But she never saw anything like the spirits of these young people. So far from their father having subdued them, it seemed as if he had left them his wildness without his fits of melancholy. Perhaps it was hardly fair to expect that the children of such a parent should be like other people.

The steward, on his grey pony, had trotted past the carriage; and he was now collecting the workmen and their tools in preparation for Mr. Cranston's order to throw open the gates.

"Come, Richard, you must get out," cried Wallace, who had alighted from the phaeton. "We are only waiting for you."

The knocking began. Mrs. Day could not bear it. Every blow went to her heart. She wandered away, thick and damp as was the grass, till she turned an angle of the wall where the noise was deadened, and she was out of sight of the rest of the party. There was a strange mingling of sounds. The high wall of rock which rose on the other side of the stream, to which the lawn sloped down before her, sent back an echo of the workmen's blows. The rooks were disturbed, and rose from the high trees in a cloud, to add their hoarse music to the din. Daws came fluttering out of the nest of chimneys which was visible above the wall, and pigeons appeared upon the roof, rustling and flapping their wings in prodigious perturbation. Laughter (it was Wallace's laugh) mingled strangely with the other sounds; and Mrs. Day decided in her own mind that Mr. Cranston, who was never wanting in proper feeling, ought to check such unseasonable mirth. She presently saw that Mr. Cranston was not at hand to interpose such a check. While she had wandered round one way, Fanny and her eldest brother had taken the other, and they might now be seen,—Richard standing in his usual lazy attitude, and Fanny exploring the beds where all the flowers of the garden seemed to have grown into a tangled thicket. Mrs. Day found her pronouncing that such a

beautiful spot for a garden was never so wasted before, and that this unaccountable wall round the house must be immediately thrown down, that the coppice, the stream, and the opposite rocks might be seen. Richard listened with an air of resignation, and hoped that James would think his living near enough to allow of his remaining at Fellbrow till all the alterations were completed. Richard would heartily thank anybody who would take the trouble off his hands.

“O, yes; and let you sleep till noon; till the sun is warm enough to let you sit down there by the waterside, reading till dinner; and then let you lounge on the sofa till tea, and then read or listen to us all the evening. That is the life you would like to lead this autumn,” said Fanny.

“Just so,” Richard agreed, looking round to see if there was no seat at hand. The rotten remains of one were just distinguishable among the rank grass, under a moss-grown tree; but there was no hope that it would support Richard’s lazy length.

A shout, and then a screech, with a final clang, now told that the gates would open and shut, and that Richard was wanted. His brothers were in the yard when he joined them, both breast-high in thistles. They would not hear of their sister being kept back by this cause. They carried her through,—or rather over, this wilderness of weeds, and placed her on the steps of the door. They offered to perform the same service for Mrs. Day, but she once more turned away, almost without answering. Fanny thought this the most curious-looking old house she had ever seen, and, in spite of the desolation of its present aspect, she could not help enjoying the romantic prospect which began to open upon her of the kind of life she might lead here. These lattice windows,—so many and so small,—were made to be gently opened, in greeting to the rising moon. That carved wooden seat beside the door should be restored for the sake of the wandering merchant who might wish to open his pack before the eyes of the lady of the house. Those broad eaves were made for the swallows to build under.—When she entered the hall, what a sight was there!

“O, Wallace, stop! Do stand still a minute,” cried she, as Wallace strode before her, dealing destruction right and left among the cobwebs. Never were such cobwebs seen; and it was difficult to imagine what the spiders could be that wove them. They hung like flimsy curtains from the ceiling to the floor, and, as the newly-admitted air waved them in the yellow sunshine which burst in at the door (the windows being wholly obscured by dust) they exhibited a texture of such beauty as it indeed required some resolution to destroy. Wallace would not, however, submit to a long detention. Parting at the stroke of his switch, the delicate fabrics fell, forming a dusty tapestry for the walls.

“Do but look!” cried Wallace, when he had made his way first into the library. “Grass grown to seed on the mantel-piece! Where the deuce did the seed and the soil come from?”

As one and another entered the room, new wonders became apparent. Fanny was surprised to see the shelves full of books. She looked close to see what they were, and

was startled by meeting a pair of bright eyes where a space was left between the volumes.

“It is—yes, it is a stuffed owl,” said she to Richard. “But what an odd place to hide it in!”

“A stuffed owl!” cried Wallace, coming up: “we will soon see that;” and he touched the creature with the end of his switch; in answer to which salutation it ruffled its speckled plumage, pecked angrily, and then burst away in the direction of a window which was now perceived to be broken. James decreed that this room should be appropriated to Fanny, and that she should never more be known by any other name than Minerva. Seated here, with her owl and her books, she could never say a foolish thing again.

The young lady was not long in doing something which, in most young ladies, would be called foolish. She kneeled on the stained carpet to draw out a volume or two of the row of mouldy folios next the floor. She was fortunate in finding another curiosity.

“Look, look, Richard! Leave those globes alone, and come here. Here is a skeleton of something. What is it, Wallace? A rabbit? It looks like a rabbit; but there can be no rabbits in this place. That is right; take away the next volume, and the next.” Wallace was doing this, under pretence of wanting more light; for he was vexed at not being able to pronounce in a moment what animal this was the skeleton of.

“How curious! how very pretty!” continued Fanny; “spun all over with cobwebs, and fastened to the wall with cobwebs! But what animal can it be? Something that crouches.”

“Ah, ha!” cried Wallace; “now I see. It is a cat. Here is the skeleton of a rat a little way before it. Plainly a rat, you see, which could get no farther between the books and the wall: this great Josephus stopped it.”

“And it dared not go back for fear of the cat; and the cat could not quite reach it. But what prevented the cat’s going back? Oh, it had forced its way in too far; and the more it crouched, the broader its back would be. How it must have longed to get at the rat! If the rat had had any generosity, it would have gone back and given itself up. It was not jammed, but only barred in behind and before; and when it was certain not to escape, it might as well have been eaten as starved.”

“Perhaps it hoped to be released,” observed James.

“I am sure that cat did, if, as I believe, it is the same that I used to take care of and torment,” said Richard. “I plagued the poor thing terribly, I have no doubt; but she never mewed but I answered her. How she must have wondered what had become of me! How piteously she must have cried for me, while she was starving to death here! One touch of mine to those books would have given her her prey and her liberty. Bring her out, Wallace, and the rat too; I shall have them taken care off.”

“I think James had better make a sermon about them,” Fanny observed; “something about malice, or greediness, and what comes of them.”

“There is matter for many sermons in this room,” observed Richard gravely. The steward touched his hat at this remark, and was uncovered from that moment.

The apartments in which no windows were broken were in better condition, though it was at first difficult to breathe in them, and the green stains on the wall forbade Fanny to hope to be immediately established there. Three westerly rooms,—one of which was the drawing-room,—were in better condition than any others, and it was decided that upon these should the science and art of the tradespeople of A— be first employed.

“Come, come, Fanny, you have been here long enough for to-day,” said Richard. “Do go down before you are quite chilled or suffocated.” Fanny declared herself in no danger of either the one or the other calamity. She was at the moment looking abroad upon the park at her feet, and the mountainous range behind, and feared nothing so much as this being pronounced an unfit residence for her, and her return to London insisted upon. She waited anxiously for the reply to the steward’s question,—

“What do you think of the place, sir? Have you any idea of living in it, now you see what it is?”

“O yes, if you have people at hand who can set it to rights, and if—”

His brothers understood the contortion of his long form, and laughed.

“And if,” said they, “anybody will be master instead of you. Leave it to us.”

Wallace would enjoy nothing so much as such an excuse for making the most of a fine sporting season; and James had no objection to go backwards and forwards between Fellbrow and his new living,—taking what sport he could get at the one place, and perhaps amusing himself with building a house at the other.

“As for the quality of the tradespeople, sir,” said the steward, “you will be better off than if you had happened to come a while ago. Among other things that the new road has brought us, sir, is a number of better workmen than we had before. Some of the old folks, who cannot give up their custom of doing their work as slow as they please, and charging what they like, are apt to stand grumbling at their doors, with their hands in their pockets. But what you have to do with, sir, is the new-comers, in the new part of the town, who will be glad of the opportunity of keeping a-head in the competition, and doing your work out of hand.”

“I had rather employ the old ones who used to work for my father, if they will bestir themselves to serve me properly.”

“I doubt they won’t, sir; and I would not have you think yourself under obligation to employ them. They have made, and are making, provision enough for themselves out of your property already.”

What could this mean? The gentlemen must ask Morse. Morse, the gamekeeper? Then it was meant that the tradesmen and work-people of A— were poachers. But which? It could not surely be meant that glaziers and carpenters, shoemakers and chimney-sweepers, made any hand of poaching. The steward supposed time would show what sort of men the gangs were composed of. This much he knew; that the people he alluded to spoke of the falling off of their business for the sake of new-comers, and of the weight of their taxation, as if they thought it justified their laying hands on a property which they did not consider as a property; which was the case with game all over the world.

Wallace threatened to rectify the notions of the people of A— as to property very speedily, if they ventured to interfere with the present or future sport of himself and his brothers. James, meanwhile, was hoping that the poachers had not, at any time, found the way to the cellars. If the carpets were left on the floors to rot, and the books on the shelves to grow mouldy, it would be very hard that there should be no wine in the cellars to ripen. He proposed that a descent should be effected for purposes of search, and that a supply of any which might be found should be sent to the inn, as it was scarcely likely that wine of a good quality could be met with there. The steward had a word to say in favour of the wine at the Turk's Head; but added, that he knew the cellars under their feet to be well-stocked, both with ale and wines, which must now be in fine order.

Mrs. Day had more thoughts about the levity of young people when she saw how the family issued from the old mansion, after their first greeting of it. The clergyman seemed to be taking equal care about the conveyance of his sister and some crusted port; and Wallace was vociferating for glasses, as he was bent on trying the ale upon the spot. The steward was nearly as grave as herself; but for him there was the comfort of having employment, and the countenance and encouragement of a master once more. He was relieved from the misery of seeing the property going to ruin; and, after all, as he comforted himself with saying, let these young men be as wild as they will, they can never be so eccentric as their poor father,—at least, not if they had the least touch of their mother in them.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter II.

PATRIMONIAL APPENDAGES.

Whatever the steward might have to say in favour of the new workmen of A— over the old, he did not wish the preference to apply in the case of a choice of innkeepers. His old acquaintance, Pritchard, of the Turk's Head, was warmly patronised by him, in opposition to the upstart at the Navarino, who, with all his show of balconies and a splendid furnishing of his bar, treated his guests with sour wines and cold rooms.

As might be supposed, so rare a party of inmates was indulged with all the luxury that Pritchard could afford. In hopes of diverting them from their intention of taking their sister for a little tour among the lakes while a corner of the house at Fellbrow was being prepared for her, the host of the Turk's Head took care that she should be worshipped as if she had been a rich ward on her way to Gretna. Every time she moved, the entire household seemed to start to anticipate her wishes. She was made so comfortable at the inn, and she so thoroughly enjoyed the beauties of the park and neighbourhood of Fellbrow, that there was little fear that she would desire to go to the lakes, or anywhere else, while awaiting her reception in what she wished to be her future home. The only circumstance that annoyed her was the notice she excited in the town, or at least in the neighbourhood of the inn. Pritchard shook his head over this, as over a grievance which could only be lamented, when any one could have told that his bragging, and his complacency, and his confidences had given the Cranstons half the consequence which caused them to be watched through shop-windows, way-laid by loungers, and talked over by gossips. A large portion of the remaining half might be ascribed to the extraordinary accession of goods, chattels, and followers which they brought into the place.

The half-deserted street in which Mrs. Barton, the perfumer, lived had not afforded such a sight for many a day as might now be witnessed morning and evening. Maynard, Miss Cranston's old serving-man, took the young lady's spaniel out for an airing twice a day; and all the inhabitants who remained in the neighbourhood soon learned to watch for the approach of the curious pair,—the prim beau, with his pig-tail hanging down his back, and the animal, no less spruce in its jacket of the finest flannel, tied with blue ribbons.

“Miss Biggs!—do make haste, Miss Biggs!” cried Mrs. Barton to her shopwoman. “Did you ever see such a fine head for powder as the old gentleman has? Quite one of the old school, I will answer for it;—the school for manners, as I say.”

Miss Biggs smiled sweetly as Maynard came up the street, and pronounced the phenomenon charming. She had not a very distinct idea of what the old school was; for while Mrs. Barton was always praising it, and might therefore be supposed a pupil, she was, in dress, of the very newest school she could get any tidings of, and, in manners, of no school but her own. She had one scholar in Miss Biggs, who had, by

this time, learned to hang her head as far to the left as her mistress to the right. She had not Mrs. Barton's prime requisite—an extremely wide mouth—for smiling; but she did not fall behind her in drawling and universal sympathy.

“It is really a privilege,” said Mrs. Barton, withdrawing her head from between two glasses of wash-balls, “to see such a fine old relic of Church and King, which always has my vote.”

“And mine, I am sure: I am always for Church and King,” replied Miss Biggs. “So different, you see, ma'am, from the upstarts, with not a grain in their hair, that come to the new inn, and are gone! Do you think, ma'am, we shall have the gentleman's custom for powder? Perhaps if—”

Mrs. Barton was already sailing round the counter, and she reached the door in time to prepare a deep curtsy for Maynard. The old man looked behind him, to make sure that the obeisance was meant for him, and then took off his hat, and offered a bow of the last century. Mrs. Barton did not leave him long uncertain whether he was to pass on or stay. Might she presume to hope that self-love was to be flattered by the stranger's approbation of the old town?

“Dear ma'am,” interposed Miss Biggs, “how can we expect that strangers should feel as we do towards our old town? Is it reasonable, dear ma'am?”

All were ready to agree in this; but Maynard protested that it was not a town to be despised. He admired enthusiasm in behalf of one's native place—

O! how good he was to say so!

And independent of this, he saw much to admire in A—. The church-tower was a great ornament; and the market-place was remarkable for a town of the size. He was sorry to see so many shops shut up in this quarter; and that red-brick meeting-house—

“Ah! there—there, sir, you touch a tender point. Our dissenters,—I am ashamed to say it, I assure you,—our dissenters are so—O, dear sir! You cannot think what a weight it is upon our minds,—upon loyal minds, sir, that espouse Church and King.”

“O, sir!” added Miss Biggs, “I hope Church and King is your motto. I am sure *you* must be loyal.”

Maynard flattered himself that he was so; and he had been put to a pretty strong trial on that head,—so much as he had been in France.

“In France!—in that land of rebellion and conflagration, and blasphemy!” Mrs. Barton shuddered, and Miss Biggs followed her example. They begged pardon,—they did not mean to hurt his feelings,—but, if they set foot in that place, they should expect a judgment to overtake them before they could get back again.

Perhaps so; unless they went in the way of duty, the old gentleman said: but he went in the way of duty,—in the service of his young lady; notwithstanding which, he was

very glad to get back again. He had had an idea, before he went, that he should find everybody wearing powder; but, if it used to be so, it was not so now.

Mrs. Barton had once found herself in a precisely similar mistake, which Miss Biggs allowed to be very remarkable. When our gentry began to return after the war, there was really very little more hair-powder issued from her shop than before. She had looked forward to this as a set-off, if Miss Biggs remembered, against the increase of rent which her landlord clapped on in proportion as people came home to live. Heaven knew she was loyal in her heart, and ready to assist the war as long as his Majesty chose to fight; but she could not but feel that she had borne her full share. She had renewed her lease at a higher rent, in the prospect of more custom, and then found that the tax on hair-powder,—a tax laid on to help the war,—had put people off wearing hair-powder!

“And your rent was not low, during the war, I dare say, ma’am. Though you let it be raised afterwards, I dare say it was high enough before. You like these times of low rents much better, I don’t doubt.”

“Low rents!”

“Better!” cried the ladies, looking piteously at each other.

“Why, let me see. There are a great many empty houses in this street, ma’am. House rent cannot be high here, though you are in the neighbourhood of the market.”

“But my lease, dear sir. Ah! there is the point, you see. When my lease was renewed, this street was the great thoroughfare of the town. It is untold the traffic there was,—it is indescribable the gentlemen’s carriages that used to pass my door, before people went out of their minds, as I say, about the new inn, and all the building that has gone on in that quarter.”

“For my part, I have never countenanced such doings,” said Miss Biggs, “going so far as to take my walk the other way on Sundays. To build new houses, when such as these that you see are standing—but the rage for building exceeds everything.”

“That came of the high rents,” said Maynard. “There was too much building by far, in most places.”

“And the new road. O! the opening of that new road! I shall never forget it. And my lease with six years to run from that very day.”

“It was a bad speculation, indeed, ma’am. Speculators in leases should take care—”

Mrs. Barton looked full of woe at being called a speculator. She had the testimony of her conscience that she did not deserve it.

“I mean no offence, I assure you, ma’am,” continued Maynard. “I mean no more than that every tenant who takes a lease is a speculator. If you agree to pay so much rent,

and be answerable for so much tax, for fourteen years, and the tax happens to be presently taken off—”

The bare idea seemed to afford rapture.

“Your bargain turns out a good one; and the same if the neighbourhood improves, so as to render your situation a more desirable one than it was before. Your case, you say, is the reverse. Rent and tax remain as they were, and the neighbourhood is less desirable than it was; and so I say it is a bad speculation to you. ’Tis a pity you can’t take up your house, and carry it to the new road, and set it down there.”

Maynard was easily convinced how clever he should be thought, if he could put the ladies in the way of doing this. Such a very capital idea! the ladies thought it, till told that it was not original;—that in America such a thing had been heard of and seen as the removal of a dwelling on wheels.

The speculation was followed out;—how charming it must be to the owner of the house to be able to put it where it would be sure of bringing a good rent till it was worn out, instead of placing it, as now, where there was no certainty of how much or how little it would be in request twenty years hence.—How charming it would be to the tenant to have the power of wheeling himself into any position he liked, or of obtaining a reduction of rent in case of the desired ground being preoccupied! (for in those circumstances, rent would be precisely proportioned to the advantages of the locality.) How charming, lastly, to the government, to receive the house-tax in a steady proportion which none could dispute: for no house-tax could then be collected unless it were lowered *ad valorem*. No one who could move away would stay in a poor situation, to pay a tax as high as had been imposed in a favourable locality. Equity would be the order of the day, Mrs. Barton decided, if houses went on wheels; and landlords, tenants, and assessors might be all loyal and harmonious together.—Miss Biggs put her head out at the door to take a survey of the solid front of the dwelling, while her mistress tried the stability of the foundations with her toe. There was little hope that this house could be set upon wheels. The house would be even more difficult to shift than the lease.

Mrs. Barton next declared herself liable to nearly as much sorrow for her neighbours’ afflictions as for her own; during which announcement her companion smiled with arch amiability at Maynard. Mr. Pritchard, at the Turk’s Head, paid prodigiously in the articles of rent and taxes; and how he had suffered from his Navarino rival could only be known to those who had been formerly accustomed to see the sporting gentry throng to his inn at this season. He was once proud of the consequence of his inn, as shown by the charges it had to bear; but now, he talked very differently, poor man, about such charges. He had been heard to say, more than once lately, a thing—a fact—something which he would hardly say to the young gentlemen who were now occupying his best apartments.—What could this be?—After much pressing on the one side, and “Shall I, Miss Biggs?” on the other, it appeared that Pritchard complained of his house having been for years taxed nearly three times as much as Fellbrow itself. No one could believe it, as Mrs. Barton had told the complainant. It was impossible that any one could credit it.

“I can, ma’am,” said Maynard. “I heard a good deal of that matter in London; and I dare say some of the same ridiculous confusion and partiality,—or I should rather say inequality,—may exist in this place. But, halloo, what comes here? Please to let me in, ladies. If you will let me in, and shut the door—I never could abide these packs of those animals,—a very different thing from carrying one quiet little creature like this. There! look how it hugs me, at the very hearing and sight of the pack! Now we shall do!”

Mrs. Barton rejoiced in such an opportunity for hospitality. She became suddenly remarkably afraid of a pack of harriers, and took care that the door was fastened as securely as if harriers had been especially addicted to eating and drinking pomatum and lavender water. Miss Biggs kneeled to the spaniel, and coaxed it till sent by a sign from her mistress to bring a little glass of fine cordial for their guest, whom they declared they should keep fast prisoner till all danger of encountering that dreadful pack of dogs was past. There was an upper window from which their progress could be traced for some distance; and the cook was called from cooking the “little rasher” to take her station at this watch-post. Maynard had so much to say about his young master’s love of sport, and his young mistress’s virtues and graces, and the wealth of them all, that there was little chance of the spaniel having its usual airing this morning. The inventory of Mr. Cranston’s dogs, with the necessary comments, consumed as much time as would have carried Fanny’s favourite a couple of miles on the moor.

The pack and the huntsman were not without their admirers, meanwhile. Among the many who looked knowingly or joyously on them, none were more emphatic than Mr. Taplin,—the lawyer, as he was called before he failed,—the assessor, as he had been generally named since his friends had procured him the appointment. What a fine set of new subjects for assessment had he in this family of the Cranstons! How many servants and carriages! Armorial bearings, of course; and here was the huntsman; and besides this pack, there were Mr. James’s pointers, and Miss Cranston’s spaniel, and the fine terrier of Mr. Wallace. Then there were horses in abundance on the road, he understood. It was a pity the house and window duties could not be made more suitable in amount to such a mansion as that at Fellbrow. He must try, for the sake of justice, as well as of his own pocket, to contrive an increase. He trusted that such wealthy and high-spirited young men would not be troublesome as to the amount of tax they were to pay,—either for their habitations or their pleasures.

He stood watching the picturesque group for some time after it had reached the Paddock,—a place well known to every sporting gentleman who passed through A—. The Paddock was the residence of a noted horse-dealer; and Swallow, the tenant, had had the honour of welcoming to his stables almost every man of note in his particular line in the kingdom. Many a characteristic group might be seen in the shadow of his spacious gateway. Many an honoured voice might be heard in oath or laughter from his range of stables; and many a hero of the field had trod the grass of the ample paddock in the rear. The thresher in Mr. Whitford’s barn sometimes laid aside his flail to watch the curiously-coated and hatted gentry who were let into the sacred enclosure; and the thresher’s son, a shepherd-boy on the sheep-walk above, stood to wonder at the friskiness of the fine animals in Swallow’s field.

Swallow was not sorry that the dogs had come by this road, as it was of importance to him to establish a friendly intercourse with Mr. Cranston's huntsman; but the present moment was not exactly that which he would have chosen for their arrival. Half an hour later would have been better. A van, on its way to London, was at the door. It could not wait; and certain packages must be put into it whose contents could scarcely fail to be guessed by the huntsman, any more than by the gamekeeper. It was provoking that the girls were out. They would have got the packages in at the back of the van very cleverly, while he was amusing the huntsman with a glass of liquor and conversation. He must try whether George could take the hint.

George was less quick at taking a hint than he would have been if he had not been accustomed to depend much on his sisters. He was not ashamed of being excelled by them, and, in a manner, taken care of by them, they having, as he always said, each a double mind, with which his single one could not pretend to compete. These girls were twins, and more perfectly alike in mind (if possible) than in form and feature. Their brother, still a rough and sadly careless boy, laughed at them, was proud of them, and depended upon them. The book which every horse-dealer is by law obliged to keep open to the inspection of the assessor was left in George's charge by his father, who had him educated sufficiently to qualify him for making the necessary entries of sales. George was perpetually warned of the heavy penalties to which his father would be liable if the due entries were not made, if the book was not always kept open to the observation of the assessor, and regularly delivered in, every quarter, for examination and discharge; but it is probable that his father would more than once have been compelled to disburse the penalty, if Anne and Sarah had not been on the watch to guard against his carelessness. It was indeed a pity that they were absent now. George was so busy forming friendships with the dogs that his father's coughs and winks were disregarded; and package after package was brought out and left within sight and scent, while room was being made for each in the van. In vain did Swallow interpose his broad shoulders and offer snuff. The huntsman was mounted, and could see what was passing in the rear; and he was moreover not to be persuaded to take a pinch. Swallow saw that his new acquaintance had picked up a notion at the Paddock which would not be long in reaching the owner of the Fellbrow preserves.

George's mind had risen a flight too high to be brought down this morning by usual influences. He was off with the harriers, in the midst, and almost as fleet as any of them, before his father's angry voice roused his ear. He looked back a moment, saw the assessor entering the gateway, supposed his father would find the book if it was wanted, and immediately heard nothing more than the greetings of the dogs.

"There is no knowing now," growled his father, "when we shall get the lad back again. He had rather kennel with the dogs than come home to his business, any day of the year.—The book! O, it is at your service, I don't doubt.—Let me see: where can the boy have hid it? My family are all out, you see, sir. If it is equally convenient, I will send one of them with the book, this afternoon."

"Show it me now, Swallow. I don't call this keeping the book open for my inspection at all times. Make haste, and find it, if you please. Your boy is not the only one of the family, I fancy, who has the taste you describe,—for sport rather than business. Hey,

Swallow? But you will remember the gentlemen are on the spot now, and take care of yourself, I suppose. Remember they are on the spot, I advise you.”

“It would be rather hard to forget it,” replied the horse-dealer; “so many shows as they have brought into this quiet place. There is not a soul in A— but is watching them from morning till night,—except, indeed, the people (and they are not few) that are swarming about the Fellbrow house, like bees building their comb. Here’s the book, sir; and when I have added the sale I made half-an-hour ago—”

While Swallow was laboriously scrawling his two lines, the assessor walked off. There was no room for talk of penalties in his department this day. He would come again when all the Mr. Cranstons’ riding-horses should have arrived, and would want to be discussed. Swallow looked after Mr. Taplin, saying to himself, “Fine talk that, of my taking care of myself against the gentlemen, when he himself is in as deep as any of us! If he threatens me, I can bid him look to his own share.”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter III.

CLERICAL DUTY.

October was not half gone before a sufficient portion of the Fellbrow house was made habitable to accommodate the family. Fanny's rapture was great when the ugly high wall was in process of being demolished, to give place to the light fence which would not exclude such a view as her eyes desired to rest upon as long as the sun was above the horizon. These October mornings were glorious. One especially, when the whole family were anxious for fine weather, equalled any that she had enjoyed in a southern climate. It was to be a morning of fishing,—the first regular fishing party since their arrival; and Fanny was at her window before the rich hues of the sunrise had melted from the northern mountain tops, or the white frost evaporated from the unsunned lawn. The face of the limestone rocks opposite was grey in the shadow, and the stream below was yet black as if it had no bottom; but the rays were abroad which would soon make it gleam at every bend, and paint in it the reflection of the autumn leaves that yet danced above it when the breeze sported in the overhanging coppice on the hither side. Some of the loftiest trees in the park already began to be lighted up; and on a green platform of the retiring rocks, the blue roofs of a little hamlet glistened in the gush of sunshine poured upon them through the chasm which brought the waters from the heights to the cisterns at the doors of the inhabitants. Already might the hind be distinguished, pacing forth warily from the thicket, and looking from side to side, while her fawn bounded past her, breast-high in the hoar grass. Already might the shepherd and his dog be distinguished on the faint track of the sheep-walk, now driving their scudding flock, and now letting them disperse themselves over the upland. Already were lively voices heard below the window, and already were busy hands making a picturesque display of nets and wicker baskets on the grass. Never was there a lovelier morning seen; and Fanny's spirits were braced to their highest pitch when she threw open her lattice,—(how much more willingly than she would have thrown up the sash!) and sent a greeting down to her brother James who was talking with one of the men.

“Who is going to ride?” she asked, seeing that a groom was leading a saddled horse. “Who wants Diamond this morning, James?”

“I do. Ah! it is a great plague that anybody should want to be buried this morning, of all mornings. But I put the people off before, and I cannot do it again. I can get it over, with what else I have to do, before you have finished your sport, if you will only make me sure where I may find you. That is what I am settling now; and then I am off.”

“But what else have you to do? A marriage or two, perhaps?”

“Very likely; and three or four more funerals. They find they must make the most of me when they can catch me. But the business I mean is, looking about to see where I

shall build my house. You ought to be with me for that. If your mare was but here, I would make you give up the fishing for to-day, and ride over with me.”

“I will do that when you know there is to be a wedding or two. The little brides will not object to my seeing them married, I dare say; and I should like to make acquaintance with these mountain brides that you used to talk so finely about before—”

“Before I saw them:—before I knew how confoundedly they would come in the way of sport. I have seen none yet that it would be worth your while to ride seven miles to make acquaintance with. I don’t see how they are better than the Easter-Monday brides in Birmingham, in tawdry shawls and flying ribbons. If they have not such gay shawls, they are ten times more dull and silly: so, if you mean to keep your romance about them, you must keep your distance too. Good-bye: only be so good as not to leave Moystarn before two, unless you see me sooner. I’ll make Diamond do his duty this morning. Good-bye.”

Diamond had no other inclination than to do his duty. Once having cleared the park, he brought all the little children out of the cottages by the sound of his firm and rapid trot on the hard road. Their mothers curtsied at the doors and windows, inspired with an equal respect for the handsome rider and his sleek steed; and the labourers turned round from their work on the fences and in the fields to smile the vacant smile with which they honoured passengers who took their fancy. It was not Diamond’s fault that he was urged on so nearly over a child as to be obliged to bolt to avoid the sin of manslaughter. It was not his fault that he could not, before he reached the brook, slacken his speed sufficiently to avoid splashing the fair horsewomen who were crossing at the time. For this last offence he received a more severe punishment from his master than for any preceding. The flogging was so vigorous, and Diamond’s resentment of it so strong, that he bolted once more into the water, and there made a splashing which sent the ripples of the clear stream in chase of one another, high and low. The boy on the foot bridge shrank from the wetting, and the horsewomen retired right and left to watch the issue. Each patted her pony’s neck; each laughed as Diamond turned round and round; each prepared to use the switch, when her own pony began to exhibit signs of restlessness. James was so far struck with this amidst his contest with Diamond, that he looked curiously at the pair when he came up finally out of the brook. He was as much amused as surprised at what he beheld. No twins that he had ever seen could compare with these for likeness. It was not only the colour of the eyes and of the hair, and the frame of the features; much less the perfect similarity of their dress, and of the animals they rode. The glance was the very same, revealing an identity of mind. They were now side by side, and he perceived that every touch of the rein was the same. Smiles came and went as if from one heart; and yet they did not look at each other, except to agree which should utter the words that were on the tongues of both. If they had been less pretty than they were, James could not have pushed on his way as before. His curiosity was so amused, that he laughed without restraint; and could scarcely repent having done so when he saw the blush and confused gravity of each little face which filled up its close straw bonnet.

“That boy is like you, though less like than you are to each other,” observed James. “I suppose he is your brother?”

“Yes, sir; our brother George. People think him most like father.”

“And you most like your mother? Your mother must be a very pretty woman. Is not she?”

There was no answer. The girls were too busy trying to help laughing. In order to find out whether this arose from the mother being otherwise than pretty, or from the daughters liking to be complimented, James went on to praise their riding. They took this as a matter of course, having been in the habit of riding almost as regularly as of dining, all their lives. How could they contrive rides for every day?

“We have always some place that we must go to, especially at this time of the year; and sometimes it is a weary round before we can get home. We are going one of our longest rides to-day.”

“To some market, I should have thought, if your pack-saddles had not been empty. Why do you use empty pack-saddles?”

“They will not be empty long, sir. Anne has begun to load her’s, you see.”

“So her name is Anne. What is your’s? Sarah? Very well; I shall know Anne from Sarah by her having a load on her pack-saddle. Pray do your parents know you from each other?”

“Dear, yes, Sir! except just in the twilight.”

“Yet your voices are the same. I would give a crown-piece to know whether one voice ever gets above the other,—whether you ever quarrel. I do not see how you can well help it; for you must often want the same thing at the same time—something that you cannot both have.”

What sort of thing did he mean? Almost everything that could not be divided might be used by them together.

“And do you always wish the same thing, and think the same thing?”

“We do presently, if we don’t directly. Good-bye, sir; we are going down this lane to the farm-house.”

“But you will have to come out upon this road again: there is no other path away from that farm-house. I shall go with you.”

“You must not; they will not want you. We shall not stay two minutes.”

“Then I shall wait for you.”

“Oh, thank you, sir! We will make haste. George has run on already, you see: he goes no farther than here; so we can get on faster than we have been going.”

“Stop! Why should you both go? There is George to take care of one. Anne, do you stay with me, and let the empty saddle go down the lane.”

Left alone with Anne, the gentleman began to animate her with praises of her native district. She agreed that it was a pretty part to ride in for pleasure. She supposed the gentleman rode for pleasure.

“Not exactly so to-day, though I do not pretend that my ride is not a very pleasant one just now. I am going to bury a child. Yes: you need not look so shocked; I did not say I was going to kill a child. You would have children buried when they die, would not you?”

“Yes, sir; but we did not know that you were a clergyman;” and she looked as if she had thoughts of dismounting to make a curtsy.

“O yes, I am a clergyman; and besides burying a child a good deal younger than you, perhaps I may have to marry a girl very little older than you.”

“That will be Catherine Scott, perhaps,” observed Anne; “she was eighteen last July. Do you think she will be married to-day, sir? I think she might have told us, however.”

“You had better ride on with me, and take her by surprise. Come, give your pony the switch a little. Never mind Sarah,” seeing her look back; “she will overtake us presently. Her saddle is not loaded, you know.”

Anne shook her head: Sarah was not in sight; and the faithful twin evidently meditated turning back. If the gentleman would go forward, she said, and not keep the family waiting for the burial, Sarah and she might come up in time to see the marriage, if it should be Catherine Scott’s. James muttered something about being late, and gave her pony such a cut with his whip as sent the animal forward at a rate that Sarah was scarcely likely to surpass; and, by keeping half a length in the rear, he sustained the pony’s panic, and baffled all the damsel’s attempts to check its speed. This lasted till they came within sight of a row of cottages, at the door of one of which was a funeral train, just beginning to form. It would not do, even James perceived, for the mourners to see him galloping to the churchyard in a race with a country girl. He turned her horse, as well as his own, into a field, and then stopped to laugh. In answer to Anne’s reproaches, he declared that he only wanted to make her do something unlike her sister for once. He rode between her and the gate of the field, saying that, before she went, she must tell him whether she did not think this field the very place to build a house upon. If she would only look up at the view to the north, and measure with her eye the distance from the church—

“There’s Sarah!” cried Anne, cleverly wheeling her pony round, and effecting her escape. She was off, like an arrow from a bow; and Sarah might be seen hastening hitherward over a heath, about a mile and a half distant.

“They will come together point-blank, like knights in a single combat,” thought James. “I must be there to pick them up, if they are unhorsed. I must find a gap in the fence, lower down, that these people about the cottages may not be scandalized. I must behave well to-day, when once I have seen what those girls are doing.”

When met, they were pacing side by side, looking equally offended. James could scarcely appear as penitent as he intended, so infinitely amused was he at the perfect resemblance of the twins being preserved and made more striking amidst their change of mood. If Anne looked heated by her violent exercise, Sarah was not less so through fear and resentment. Both glanced away from him; neither would turn the head when he spoke. The tendency to ponder the ground was rather the strongest in Anne: as she had lost out of her glove the sixpence she had brought to pay the turnpike. What turnpike?—where was it? Half a mile beyond the church.—Oh! that would do very well. If they would go on, and wait for him there, he would come to them when his service was done, and take their opinion about where he should build his house, and then Anne should not be left behind for want of a sixpence: they would proceed all together. He heard Anne say to her sister that he would serve her the same trick that he had played Sarah, and that she did not believe he had any child to bury, nor any such thing.

“Only come on and see, Miss Anne,” said he. “You shall get into the grave yourself, if you like, to make sure; only I suppose you would not go in without your sister. But, really now, if you will help me to settle where I shall build my house, I will help you with your business afterwards, if you will only tell me what it is.”

And he looked narrowly at the sacks with which the saddles were provided.

“Picking up poultry,” the girls replied, “to send to London by the van.”

“Poultry! I shall begin to listen for a cock-a-doodle-doo, such as once kept me awake all the way to London, when I went in a stage-coach. Shall we have a cock-a-doodle-doo presently?”

“We take the poultry up dead.”

“Ah! dead. Now, does this belong to a chicken, or a turkey, or what?” drawing out a long pheasant’s feather, whose tip had just peeped out of a hole in the sack. Sarah snatched the feather, and tickled Diamond’s nose with it, so that Diamond’s master had no attention to spare for more questions for some time. There was no doubt that Anne would have done the same, if she had chanced to be next him; for she did not laugh with surprise, but smiled, as at a corroboration of an idea of her own. The act was Sarah’s, however; and she had immediately the advantage of Anne in the gentleman’s estimation. He now saw that there was certainly a something more in the one sister than in the other,—a drollery in the eyes — an archness about the mouth. It was to Sarah’s side that he returned when Diamond was once more subdued. Before he sent them on to the turnpike, he had been almost whispering to her, saving something which Anne had not heard, though she now stooped forward on her saddle, and now leaned over behind her sister, and finally rode round to James’s other side to

listen, being as yet unaware that anything would ever be said to either which the other might not share.

“You must go now,” said she, tired at last of not being able to catch what he was saying. “Those people are the weddingers. See to the bride’s silk gown! and it is no more like Catherine Scott—How came you to tell me so?”

When James had explained that he did not pretend to know brides’ names till they asked him to change them, he drew off from his companions, with a final glance in the direction of the turnpike, and directed his horse, with all sobriety of demeanour, towards the vestry. The sisters were at last convinced that he was a clergyman, when they saw the uncovered heads of the men, and the obeisances of the women and children, amidst which he moved to the discharge of his duty.

“There, I knew it would be so! How people do plague one—some with wanting to be married, and some with their squeamish troubles, as if nobody but the parson could do anything for them,” said he to himself when, on reaching the turnpike at last, no horsewomen were to be seen. “To be sure, I don’t know who else should serve the people’s turn hereabouts, unless they would step across the border to the blacksmith, and advertise for a methodist to hear them confess. But here are the blessings of having a living! These pretty creatures are tired of the very idea of me, I don’t doubt, after being kept waiting till they had no patience left.”

He was mistaken; the girls had not waited at all, but gone straight through, rather in a hurry than not, the gatekeeper said. One of them had explained that she had lost her sixpence on the road, and had left her silver thimble in pledge of payment, to be redeemed the next time she should pass that way. James, of course, redeemed the thimble, which he tried on his little finger end before he consigned it to his waistcoat pocket. It betokened as small a finger as need be seen; but that only made it the greater pity that the thimble was not Sarah’s.

The gatekeeper was deplorably stupid about the girls. He did not seem to know which was meant by the pretty one; and could give no further account of them than that they set off, at a brisk trot, along the cross-road to the right. He could not even tell whether they meant to go to the large farm-house that might be seen standing back from this road. There was nothing for it but going to learn on the spot; so James left the situation of his house to be discussed hereafter, and was presently at the gate of the farm.

The farmer knew the girls, he acknowledged; could not deny he had seen them to-day—just for a minute—an hour ago or more;—supposed they were at home by this time;—advised the gentleman to come in and have a snack and a glass of ale, and he would talk to him about ground for his house. James recollected, now that the chase had escaped him, that he really was hungry, and had some miles to ride, at the end of which he might find nothing in the shape of provisions but fish in their dying agonies. It was true, he had refused the hospitality of others of his flock;—of the old schoolmaster, who stood, hat in hand, at his humble door, ready to usher in the clergyman; of the late clerk’s widow, who had taken pains to spread her board for

him; of the mourners, who had hoped to receive at home a confirmation of the words of solace which had been spoken at the grave. All this he had declined, on the plea of extreme haste; but this was no reason that he should not now avail himself of the farmer's cakes and ale. He gave his horse to the boy who had just stopped from swinging on a gate, and entered the dwelling.

"Don't let me disturb you, I beg, ma'am," said James to the farmer's wife, who was hearing her little boy say his letters when her husband and the clergyman entered. "While you go on with your lessons, Mr. Riley will tell me where to look for a piece of land to build upon. Your little boy will be all the sooner ready to say his catechism, you know, if you go on steadily. So do not let me disturb you."

Mr. Riley bowed; Mrs. Riley blushed, and took up her scissars once more to point with: but apparently little Harry did not appreciate the desirableness of soon knowing his catechism, for he called every letter F, whether it stood at the top, bottom, or middle of the page. According to him, F stood for apple, F for fig, and F for window. He was told to turn his head towards his mamma, instead of quite away from his book; and the head was soon in its right place; but the eyes still wandered off to the extreme left, and F once more stood for pie. Then came loud whispers,—“Who is that gentleman?” “Will that gentleman fly my kite for me?” “May I look through that gentleman's spyglass?” “Is that the parson that will frown at me if I don't behave well at church?”

This was too much. Mr. Riley lost the thread of his discourse; Mrs. Riley escaped from the room, and James laughed, while the boy stood staring at him.

“So you have got a kite. Will I help you to fly it? Yes, that I will, some day.” And thus was the guest entertained, till the tray made its appearance, and the cloth was laid for a substantial luncheon.

“My dear sir, make no apologies. Here is quite a feast, I see. By all means, ma'am; a sausage, if you please. Your sausages are irresistible; and especially with such game as this. A leg, if you please, sir. A pheasant's leg and sausage is the most superb thing in the universe.”

No wonder the Rileys were flattered. The most superb thing in the universe was under their humble roof!

“I will try some day,” James continued, “if I cannot supply you with another luncheon to equal this. I will send you in some game as I pass, the first time I shoot in your neighbourhood. You relish game, I presume, Mrs. Riley?”

Mrs. Riley assented; then hesitated, and hoped Mr. Cranston would not trouble himself to do as he had said. The farmer declared that Mr. Cranston was welcome to shoot over his farm, but they could not accept any game. While James was insisting, little Harry, who had been sent away, ran in crying, and complaining that he had lost his tail, and he could not get another.

“His tail? What sort of tail?”

Mrs. Riley explained that Harry was indulged with the tail feathers of pheasants, and that he therefore disliked the disappearance of game from the pantry.

There were so many this morning, the boy complained, and now they were all gone! There were a great many indeed, hanging all in a row, and Nancy had promised him all the tails. Now there was not one left. "O dear, O dear! what shall I do without my tail?" was the boy's pathetic lamentation.

"If you will let me carry you on my horse after those young ladies who were here this morning, I dare say they can give us the very tails that were in the pantry," observed James, looking askance at the farmer as he spoke. "But, Harry, don't you like fur tails as well as feather tails? If you were a girl, you might make a fur tippet for your doll's throat of a pretty, soft, white rabbit's tail."

Harry made a hop, skip, and jump to a cupboard, and brought out a string of hares' and rabbits' tails, tied together with string, which promised to be soon as long as the leech-line of a fisherman.

"I see how it is," said James, smiling. "I am not the only person, I fancy, Mr. Riley, that you make welcome to shoot over your farm and in your neighbourhood."

"Why, sir, to speak out, what else can we farmers say to those that help away with the vermin that do us all sorts of mischief?"

"Ah! I suppose the birds plague you with the people they bring upon your ground. I saw one cover, I remember, standing alone in the middle of some very wide fields of yours, with not a hedge near enough to tempt a bird to stray; and I thought I would try my luck there next."

"You will be sure to find luck there, sir, however many may come before you. You may chance to see three hundred cock pheasants walking about there in one day. But the birds are nothing to the hares, sir; I was very nearly quarrelling with my farm, on account of the hares; and should have done so, if my landlord had not made me an allowance for them."

"How much does he allow you?"

"Two sacks of wheat per acre, sir."

"Upon my word, you have a very kind landlord."

"Not on this head, sir. My loss is much greater than two sacks per acre, I can assure you. Take the year round, and a hare is as expensive as a sheep;—for this reason,—that the hare picks the last particle of vegetation. If my grain springs an eighth of an inch one day, and the vermin nips seven hundred of the sprouts in a day,—what sheep will ever cause me such damage as that? I can stand and see the pheasants picking up their berries and acorns, at this time of the year, without wanting to wring every neck of them; but, if you'll believe me, sir,—and my wife will bear me out, I never see a hare cross the field I am in without swearing an oath at her."

Mrs. Riley not only corroborated this, but added that Mr. Riley was still more cross with rabbits.

“The rabbits! And well I may! They do such mischief round the outskirts of my coppices, that the wood will not be so fit to cut at the end of twenty years as it would at the end of sixteen without them. You cannot wonder, sir, that we farmers cannot see poachers. They are a sort of thing we are blind to. If you consider, sir, that there are six hundred acres of wheat land in this parish, and that hares consume, at the least, two sacks per acre, there are twelve hundred sacks of corn taken from men to be given to hares. I cannot think it a great sin, at this rate, to let alone anybody that helps to root out the hares.”

“You should get your landlord to allow you to shoot over your farm.”

“ ’Tis done, sir; and what comes of that? Every labourer in the parish may go and inform, unless I do him some favour that will keep his good-will; and if his liking should be for sport, why, what can we do but let each other alone?”

“Then I am afraid the landlord’s only dependence is on his own servants,—the tenant and poacher being leagued against him.”

“That sort of dependence is but small, especially when gentlemen are not on the spot in all seasons; as I may say to you, sir. There may be such a thing as a league between the poacher and the woodman;—just such a sort of league to break the laws as there was till lately between gentlemen and their woodmen.”

“My dear, what are you saying?” interrupted Mrs. Riley.

“Only what Mr. Cranston knows to be true. He knows that, till the sale of game was allowed by law, gentlemen encouraged their servants to sell the game the gentlemen themselves shot. The woodmen that I have known used to receive a quarter of the money so brought in. And, after a sporting bout, when their masters had company staying with them for the purpose, there was a higher allowance to the woodman, from the consideration of the difficulty of disposing of a large quantity of game at once.”

“I wonder how much a servant might make in this manner?” observed James. “It is a pleasant way enough of making a fortune.”

“You must consider, sir, how many the gains have to be divided amongst. Where poaching is done by gangs, as it is here, there are a great number to share in the first instance. Then there are the coachmen or van-drivers that carry the game up to London, and the poiters that take charge of it there. Then the poulterers must have their commission; double what they have on poultry, on account of the risk. And then there is the waste,—which is more than is easily counted,—what with the game being mangled, and killed out of season, and sent up in a bad state. Pheasants are sent up long after January, and hares with young; and sometimes half a sackfull is good for nothing when it is unpacked. All this can leave but little gain for the woodman’s share.”

“And his gains must be most uncertain, too. When he sends up a fine batch of game, he may chance to find that the market is overstocked. There can be no regularity of supply where it is carried on in an illegal and underhand manner.”

“That is true, sir; and I have heard from people here, disappointed in the way you speak of, that in the very middle of the season, when every dinner-table in the London gentry’s houses had game upon it, full one-third of what was sent up was thrown away. After hawking about what was not quite past cooking, and selling birds for a few pence to anybody that passed by, one poulterer alone threw two thousand partridges into the Thames. This makes our people here so united as they are. They keep up a perfect understanding all the way to London, that there may be the less difficulty in poaching to order,—which is the surest way to make money.”

“To the poulterer’s order?”

“Yes. He sends down a message, perhaps, that he has engaged to furnish some thousand head a week for three weeks, and that he depends upon this district; and then poaching is the order of the day. By the time the job is done, the newspapers begin to cry out. There is often work for the coroner, before all is over; and account is laid for a few going to prison; but where all are banded together in prospect of this, the going to prison is no disgrace, and not much of a hardship; and the manslaughter comes to be looked upon as a matter of course.”

“I shall tell my brother all this,” said James, rising. “Not so as to implicate you,” he added, perceiving that Mr. Riley looked alarmed. “Now is the time, while I am at Fellbrow, to keep a watch over our poaching neighbours. Pray do they meddle with deer?”

“Your gamekeeper can tell you that better than I can,” replied the farmer, now grown wary as to his communications. “Would you like to step abroad, sir, and look at the bit of ground I told you of?”

“Why, yes: if you think the people below have got no more funerals ready by this time.—Yes; let us go,” he added gravely, upon seeing Mrs. Riley’s glance of astonishment. “Mrs. Riley, I owe you thanks for your hospitality. If I have injured your son’s learning, I must do my best to help him to make it up, by and bye, when he may come to church without fear of being frowned at.”

Mrs. Riley pronounced him a pleasant mannered gentleman, as she peeped between the climbers that covered the window to watch him and her husband up the hill at the back of the house.

“You will not be troubled with a heavy groundrent, you see, sir, in a situation like this,—(if you should pitch upon this place, where the land is not to be sold.) You will find the difference between building here, and building near the falls in the hills yonder, where the gentry are rearing their boxes and their villas. Here you will have to pay no great deal more than if the spot of ground was to be under the plough instead of under a roof.”

“Ah! you country folks know little yet of the difference in value of bits of land that measure the same to a hair’s-breadth. A friend of mine has been building a villa at Chiswick lately, and he pays four times as much for the ground as he gets as the ground-rent of a capital house in Winchelsea. This is all very fair. People must pay for good situations; but I dare say you have no idea of such differences here?”

“Enough to wish that the land-tax went a little more according to situation than it does. ’Tis really ridiculous, how one has to pay five times as much as another, without any reason that ever I heard tell.”

“We south people beat you there, too. The very place I was mentioning, Winchelsea, where there are not more than fifty houses that yield the house-tax, pays, within thirty pounds, as much land-tax as Bath; and if you could look down upon Bath as we now do upon your parish, you would see the absurdity of such a taxation. In London, the difference is wider still. I know of two parishes that pay above 9000*l.* in land-tax, with a rental of 116,000*l.*; while another parish that has now a rental of 720,000*l.* pays—how much land-tax, do you think?”

“To be in the same proportion with the parishes you mention, it should be 55,000*l.*”

“Instead of which it is under 500*l.* This is the fault of the way the tax was managed at first, and not of anything that is done with it now: but it sets one to inquire, before one begins to build or to purchase. While some parishes pay 2*s.* 4*d.* in the pound, and others half a quarter of a farthing, one likes to look into the matter.”

“I see no end to the inequality, sir; that is the worst of it. If a valuation once made is never to be altered, I don’t see but that every improvement, every new bit of waste that is tilled, and every new quarter of a town that is built, must increase the inequality. There is our neighbouring county of Lancaster, with all its fine towns and villages, almost as busy as London itself, paying no more land-tax than some four or five such London parishes as you mentioned just now. You see, its being made perpetual, some five-and-thirty years ago, and allowed to be redeemed, and half of it being redeemed, makes it difficult to touch now.”

“Except to redeem the remainder. That was what Mr. Pitt wanted, no doubt—to have done with this, without loss, and then to be free to lay on a new tax. For my part, I like neither making valuation nor tax perpetual; and to allow redemption is worse still, in principle. The sacrifice made in redeeming a tax is made for ever and ever. See what a scrape we are in now, in the case of this land-tax! The only way of escape the sufferers can think of is by violating the valuation which was declared unalterable. They cry out for a new assessment; leaving the redeemed portions of land exempt, and equalizing the rest at the same rate as formerly—4*s.* in the pound. They say that this would bring the Government between one and two millions a-year more than at present; and that if the assessment was kept equal, the whole would be gradually redeemed.”

“If the tax is to be got rid of, it may be more easily done now than by and by; and a farmer may be allowed to wish it done with.”

“Why? It does not fall upon you?”

“Ask the assessor, sir, if I do not pay it into his hands, year by year.”

“Yes; but you pay it for your landlord, and you stop it out of your rent. You know, if you run away to-night, the assessor comes upon your landlord for it, instead of running after you. You know it is levied on empty houses. Why, Mr. Riley, I never before heard anybody question that the land-tax falls on the landlords, however much the point might be doubted about the house-tax.”

“I assure you, sir, there is less corn grown, by far, than there would be without this tax; and is not that a bad thing for the farmer, when a tax is the cause?”

“A bad thing for everybody: but this is, so far, only like every other tax. Every tax stints production in its way; yet there must be taxes. If we are to go on taxing classes of people, I do not know that we could have a better tax than this, if it was but made equal.”

“It will never be that, sir.”

“Perhaps so; but a direct tax, like this, is the only kind that can be made equal; so we ought to take care how we quarrel with it, and show a preference for indirect taxes,—a kind which never can be made equal. Besides its capacity of being made equal, it has other good qualities. It is certain. It is levied in a convenient way; and it goes pretty straight to the Treasury. So that, (except that I should like to see a simpler method of taxation, which should save us from laying a burden on one class, and then balancing it with a burden laid upon another class,) I have nothing to say against a properly-managed land-tax.”

“But, sir, how are you to make it equal, while the land is so unequal? If you tax all land at so much per acre, the owner of those bleak hills above will pay much more than his share; and the fine land in our best counties will yield much less than its share. Then, if you tax according to the produce, people will not be long in finding out that your tax is a tithe, sir; and you and I both know what they think of tithe.”

“What should prevent its being levied—not in proportion to surface, or to produce—but to rent? It would be thus thrown on the landlords, as I said before. The exclusive taxation of a particular class is a bad principle to go upon. But, while we do go upon that principle, and while the poorer classes pay so much more taxes than their share, this tax (equalized) is one of the last to be complained of. Rent, you know, is naturally always rising.”

“Then I wonder governments do not maintain themselves on rent. If a government was a great landowner, it might live without taxing anybody.”

“The governments of new countries, where land enough is left without an owner, will be sufficiently wise, perhaps, to see this, in course of time. If a government kept a portion of land, and behaved to its tenants like a good landlord, it would find its revenues perpetually on the increase, (with no other checks than would, at the same

time, reduce its expenditure), and not a farthing would be taken from the profits of the farmer or the manufacturer; not a particle from the rewards of anybody's industry. A fine prospect that, for a new country, is not it?"

"A fine dream, sir."

"A dream that might as certainly come true as my dream of a white house upon this slope, with a wood behind, and a sheet of water spread out where that stream is now wasted. No spot that I have seen compares with this, certainly. I should set about securing it before I leave the place, but that,"—and he half laughed, as if ashamed of his thought,—“I must bring somebody to see it first.”

"I hear, Mr. Cranston, that your sister—"

"No, not my sister.—But, what were you going to say?"

"Only what you have heard often enough before, I dare say. I hear that your sister is the prettiest and kindest lady that has ever been seen here since—"

He was going to allude to her mother, but stopped.

"It depends upon how you happen to see her. If you find her in the clouds, you may speak to her ten times before you get an answer; and I doubt whether she looks pretty then. But when she is—I will positively get her a horse from Swallow's. I am more tired than she is of waiting for her favourite mare. Nobody knows what Fanny is like that has not seen her ride,—seen her hunt. O, yes! I will bring her here when she begins to ride; and she will hear your little boy his alphabet. You should see her with children."

The hour struck, and the sound came from the church tower below to remind James of his fishing engagement. He had ceased to care about the fishing; but he had some lingering hopes of falling in again with the twins, if he pursued the circuitous road (over moorland and through a park) which they had taken.

Once on his way, he relaxed his speed no more. To judge by the starting and shying of Diamond, Diamond's master was nervous, or in excessive haste. The moor-hen and her brood fled away uncoveted from beneath the hoofs of the steed. The goats browsed unnoticed, or skipped from point to point of the grey rocks under which the road wound for a part of the way. The startling echo of the sportsman's fowling-piece, sent back by these fells, only made James look round to see if any timid girls were in sight who might be alarmed by the shock. He was as much startled himself as any timid girl, when he heard, in his passage through the park, a rustling among the underwood and high ferns in just such a corner as the twins might have chosen, for its shade and retirement, to rest in. But it was only a fawn which burst away from his doubtful call, as Sarah had done from his appointment. He was sorry and out of humour at coming so soon in sight of the party he proposed to join.

They did not see him—so busy were they with their sport. The horses, which were loose and grazing near, looked up, tossed their heads, and began to graze again. A

boatman, sitting in a skiff that lay in the dark reflection of the oaks and hollies which clothed the island in the middle of the river, touched his hat. But the party about Moy's-pool (the most promising pool in the whole length of the river) were too much occupied with their sport to look behind them, or to listen for horses' hoofs. Fish lay heaped and scattered on the grass; and more was being drawn. Richard, who was stretched at length, showed himself interested in as far as he had raised himself on his elbow. Fanny herself had hold of a net; and Wallace and the servants were as active as the occasion of so large a prey required.

"They do not want me," thought James, half sulkily. "I shall ride on to the Paddock, and see about a horse for Fanny, and—whether those girls are home."

Diamond's hoofs made a crash on the small pebbles as he turned back to the road. Fanny had so much to tell and to show, about how long they had been expecting him, how they had wished for him, and what feats they had performed without him, that James dismounted to admire the plumpness of the char, and to verify Wallace's boast that that fat old fellow that he had just caught weighed two pounds. It was not long before James was trying whether he could not draw one which would weigh two pounds and an ounce.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter IV.

CLERICAL RECREATIONS.

James was indefatigable in his exertions to get his sister suited with a horse. He was at the Paddock every day for a fortnight; and he would not be satisfied without Fanny's going there too, to try one and another horse in the fields behind the stables.

Sometimes the girls came out, curtsying to the young lady, and giving an opinion when asked. Fanny delighted her brother by a spontaneous exclamation about their beauty, the first time she saw them: but she presently vexed him by being extremely amused at their perfect likeness. If it had not been that a young greyhound was for ever in attendance upon one, Fanny could not have pretended to distinguish them. James told her she had no eyes.

"They are all stupid alike," muttered he. "That greyhound has more sense than any of them. It is only three days since I gave him to her, and *he* never mistakes Anne for her, in the dusk or in the daylight. To talk of their eyes being alike! as if colour was everything in eyes! Anne's are pretty enough; but they never had such a light in them as Sarah's. And then the blush—I thought Fanny had been fond enough of her garden to know the difference between a folded convolvulus (which is a graceful thing enough in its way) and one that is glowing in dew when the sun has just expanded it."

A very short dialogue showed Fanny which it was that James preferred. It would not have been necessary, if she had known how Sarah came by the greyhound.

"What a pretty creature Anne is!" observed Fanny, when, with a smile, Anne opened the gate, for her horse to pass into the field.

"Beautiful," cried James, with enthusiasm. "O, she is a beautiful creature!"

"You think her the prettiest,—you like her the best of the two?"

"No," said he, with sudden quietness; "I admire Sarah the most."

This made Fanny turn her head to take another look; but it was Anne who gazed after them. Sarah was busy with her dog Fido.

James was not wrong in his observations on eyes. A new light had fixed itself in Sarah's; and if he did not perceive something of the same kind in Anne's, it was perhaps owing to the light being often troubled, and sometimes dimmed. The serenity of both was gone. Sarah did not wish it back again. Anne did; every hour between rising and rest.

They had ceased to move together,—unavoidably, when one had a dog and the other had not,—but neither was yet awake to the fact that they no longer thought and felt alike. One morning they sat, like the reflection of each other, on either side of a work-

table: each making herself a frill of the same material; each with her footstool: and that the left foot of the one, and the right of the other was advanced, only made the resemblance more complete. The difference was that Anne attended to her work, while Sarah peered anxiously through the glass door which communicated with the office, where her father might be seen reading a letter. After a while, Anne reared her chin to try on the frill.

“Let me see how yours looks,” said she. “Sarah! here is mine finished; and yours is not done!”

Sarah began to ply her needle, uneasy at being left behind. Anne amused herself with stroking and coaxing the greyhound. She did not think of beginning any other employment till Sarah should be ready.

“I wonder why Mr. Cranston did not give me a greyhound!” observed Anne.

“I dare say my father will,” replied Sarah.

“But I had rather Mr. Cranston had. I am afraid,—I am pretty sure, Mr. Cranston does not like me.”

“O yes, he does.”

“How do you know? Did he tell you so?—Why did not he tell me? He never told me that he liked you.”

A deep blush spread itself over Sarah’s cheeks.

“I never saw anybody like Mr. Cranston,” pursued Anne. “None of the gentlemen that have passed through A— have been the least like him.”

“O, no: nor ever will.”

“His manner is so—I don’t know what. And his voice—”

“You may know it among a hundred;—as far off as you can hear it.”

“It goes through one’s heart.—How dull the day is now when he does not come!”

“But he does come every day.”

“No: not last Wednesday.”

“O yes! he did. But he did not stay very long: and you were in the field with George, looking after the foal. He has never once missed a day yet.”

Anne’s face was crimson while she asked why she had not seen him; why she had not been told: why—she stopped because she could not go on, and Sarah had nothing more to say than that she did not see that there was any particular occasion for telling.

“Where did he come?” demanded Anne. “Was he in this room, or in the paddock, or where?”

“I had my bonnet on, just coming to you in the field,” replied Sarah:—“my bonnet *was* on; and so I went with him;—he wanted to show me something in the park.”

“Why did not you call me? I could have come in a moment.”

Sarah did not raise her eyes while she said in a low voice that Mr. Cranston did not wish it. She was not very much taken by surprise when she saw Anne, an instant after, in a passion of tears. Her own were streaming immediately, while she hoped Anne was not very angry with her. Indeed she could not help it.—Whatever might be the mixture of feelings which embittered Anne’s tears, she spoke only of her sister’s reserve. Her reproaches were very grievous, till Sarah’s patient sorrow softened her in spite of herself. She had had no comfort of her life, for some time past, she declared. There was always something to expect and be afraid of. She could not help wishing Mr. Cranston to come, and yet she was often glad when he went away. He never came but something disagreeable passed. She did not think he would have been so careful to give her back her thimble, that he had got from the turnpike-house. It had prevented her daring to give him anything, for fear he should refuse it; and yet he had seemed to be very much pleased with the purse Sarah had netted for him. She supposed Sarah had found out that she had felt mortified often lately; for nobody could help seeing that Sarah had taken a great deal upon her lately;—more than anybody could have expected that had always known them.

Sarah tried to speak calmly while she answered that she had never intended to take more upon her than she should. She could truly say she had been more sorry for Anne than she had ever been for any one in her life. She had hoped, every time that Miss Cranston came, that either the eldest Mr. Cranston or Mr. Wallace would come with her, instead of the one that did come:—she was so certain that either of them must like Anne quite as well as the one that did come liked her.

Anne saw that all was over. She declared she did not want to be liked by anybody, sent the dog away from her knee with a rebuke, and left the room.

It was not long before Sarah was again by her side; not to comfort or condole, but to consult with her. She had been so completely thrown out by the failure of what she meant for sympathy, just now, that she did not venture to touch upon any matter of feeling with Anne. She had, in ten minutes, grown almost as much afraid of her as of a stranger: but she felt herself less able than ever to act without Anne’s opinion.

“Do you know, Anne, I do believe there is going to be an expedition to-night or to-morrow night!”

“I dare say there is. I saw my father reading a letter from London; and he sent George out to A—, directly after. Why should not there be an expedition, as there has been often before?”

“It is so different now from what it was before, when the family were not here!”

“Yes: our party will not have all their own way any longer. I suppose the woodmen must take some notice, now; and Mr. Morse has grown violent against the poachers, they say, since there has been some use in keeping up the game, as he says. Alick Morse says his father has as good a mind to dodge a poacher now as a stoat has to dodge a hare.”

“That is a bright thing for Alick Morse to say. But I am afraid of their coming to a fight, Anne.”

“O, I’m not afraid of what would come of a fight. Our party is too strong to take any harm; and they will do none to Alick and the other woodman; and Mr. Morse won’t run himself into danger against the party.”

“I was not thinking of the Morses,” replied Sarah, wondering at her sister’s dulness. “If the Mr. Cranstons mean to do what they say—”

“Ah! to be sure,” cried Anne. “They can’t know what a party they would have to come out against.”

“So, let us go and tell them,” said Sarah, briskly.

Anne stared in astonishment. To go and inform against their family and their neighbours; to provide for the discomfiture of their own party; to prevent their father from executing the orders which brought him in as much as his trade in horses;—to do this confounded all Anne’s notions of right and wrong. Sarah must be out of her mind to think of such a thing. The more vehement she was in saying this, the more inclined Sarah was to go and entreat the family not to enter the woods at night, whatever might be going on there. If she could prevail,—(and if she saw James, she had no doubt of prevailing,)—all danger to both parties might be avoided. If Anne would not accompany her, she thought she should go alone.

“You shall not,” said Anne. “If you think of such a thing, I will run and tell my father.”

“No, you will not,” said Sarah, with quivering lips. “We never told my father of one another in our lives.”

“You never thought of doing such a thing as this in your life. I shall make haste and tell him.”

They did not know that their father had just gone out. The moment Anne had turned her back, Sarah seized her bonnet,—(her field bonnet and gloves, for there was no time to run up for those in which she would have wished to appear at Fellbrow,)—and was gone from under the archway before any one noticed her escape, except Fido, against whom, in her hurry, she had shut the door, but who found his way to his mistress through an open window.

While she was breathlessly crossing a corner of the park, she fell in with Alick Morse, who sheepishly smiled and pulled off his hat.

“O, Alick, I am glad I met you. Can you tell me where the gentlemen are? Are they abroad to-day?”

Alick pointed towards the mansion, as much as to say that they were there. His smile had vanished: for if she was going up there, among the gentry, he could not walk with her, as he was about to offer to do.

“How is your father, as relates to the game?”

“Very cross, Miss Sarah. But now that I catch you alone, by a chance,—for I never had the chance before,—I want to say—”

“But I want to hear about the game and your father.”

“Well, the long and short is, I think he gets no rest for the game, night nor day. The gentlemen,—the two younger,—are after his own heart; for they have him up early every fine morning, after some sport or other; and he likes, as he says, making up for all the years he has been idle. But, dear me! ’tis at night he makes up most for all the sleep he had all those years. There’s not a bough can rustle, nor a gust moan, but he is up, and out to watch.”

“And there has been no cause, lately.—You look sly, as if you thought there soon would be.”

“Perhaps you know as much about it as I, Miss Sarah, and perhaps more. But there is no use in disturbing my father’s mind, if you should chance to meet him. Well now, if there be not—Dear me, I suppose I must go! Who would have thought of any gentry sitting reading out of doors to-day!”

“Yes: it is Mr. Cranston and Miss Cranston. You must go, Alick.”

Alick withdrew within the verge of the wood, and Sarah and Fido advanced to the bench where Richard and Fanny were sitting in the late autumnal sunshine, each with a book, and neither of them reading.—Sarah said that she came to speak to Mr. Cranston, the clergyman; but if he was not at home, she would speak now what she meant to say. Richard was always afraid of the propounding of any matter of business; and was therefore as willing to help her to an interview with James as Fanny was, because she perceived that James was the one whom Sarah wished to see. James had just gone towards the stables, and was coming directly in his gig to take up his sister, whom he was going to drive over to his living. If Sarah went straight from hence towards the stables, she could not miss him.

She did not miss him. He was approaching in his gig; and in another minute, notwithstanding an abundance of protestations, blushes and tremors, Sarah filled Miss Cranston’s place in the vehicle, and a circuitous road was found to the park gates, by which another sight of the reading party was avoided. James never used any ceremony with his sister; he declared she had a sort of pride in not keeping her appointments; so she was fair game. Ten to one, too, that she preferred dawdling with Richard till dinner-time; and Sarah could say what she wanted much better in the gig; and,

besides, James had always wished to show her the house he was building, and to see how she liked it; and there could not be a better opportunity than now.

When Sarah returned, hoping, but not assured, that James would leave the poachers to their own devices, her sister asked her no questions as to where she had been all this long time. Anne had also repented, before her father appeared again in the office, of her resolution to inform against her sister. There was peace between them, and they were at liberty to communicate their speculations upon the expedition which they were now certain was intended for to-night. There was more than usual preparation made, as soon as it grew dusk, in stocking the office with bottles and cans, with stools, pipes and tobacco, and sawdust, strewn lest any feet should bring in marks of blood—the blood of man, or of beast or fowl. The girls were sent up to bed earlier than usual. They found it extremely vexatious that their chamber looked towards the street, so that they could not see the poachers drop in through the Paddock. Mr. Taplin, the assessor, called between nine and ten—as they supposed, at a very inconvenient time; and they could imagine how vexed their father must be at his staying so long. He certainly did not go away before they gave over watching for his departure.

Sarah little knew her lover yet if she really confided in his keeping at home when he knew that poachers were abroad. All the evening he was rousing, or trying to rouse, his brother to the due degree of indignation at being despoiled of his property in so provoking a way. He paid as much for every family of pheasants as would bring up ten broods of fowls. Large sums were stopped off his rents for damage done by his hares. His deer were kept within bounds at a great expense. He paid duty for gamekeepers, horses, and dogs used in his sports; and yet the game, for which all this cost was incurred, was to be taken by a set of wretches who would be beneath notice but for their power of doing mischief. If they were stout young men, who came for the frolic of the thing, he should not be so angry; but, as far as he could learn—

Nobody could imagine where and how James managed to learn who and what the poachers were.

That did not matter; he had good authority for what he said,—that one boy, at least, was sent out to set snares—sent out by himself, or with only his father,—not amidst any bustle and frolic, but coolly, and as the agent of a theft. Then, of those who went out at night, some enjoyed the sport; but the greater number joined to get drink and money for their services as guard. The shoemaker, and the chimney-sweeper, and the constable—

The constable!

Yes. The constable went out to break heads, if need were, in defiance of the law. These men were considered too clumsy to be employed in taking the game: but they could carry bludgeons, for the consideration of a glass of gin, and a dividend from the poulterers; through what hands delivered, his brother might be surprised, some day, to learn.

Richard was willing to wait for that day. As long as they let him alone, they were welcome to anything that was in the park. If they left him deer enough to please his eye as he sat under the trees, and birds enough for his brothers' sports, his purposes were answered. He was glad they could amuse themselves with his property while he was asleep. This last word brought on him an appeal under the head of morals. Poachers were always utterly corrupted, if their practices were long unchecked; like most people (unless the members of the House of Commons might be excepted) whose work is done at night instead of in the day. Instead of the shoemaker taking up his awl, or the chimney-sweeper his sack, with the spirit that the morning naturally brings with it, these creatures would stagger home at dawn, and be thrown into bed for the day, while their wives must invent lies which their children are to tell, in excuse for their not being seen at their work. Richard could not deny that such an order of affairs was a bad one; but did not see how his arm could arrest a host of poachers; and he could not possibly be answerable for the morals of the shoemakers and constables of A—.

As nothing more was to be made of Richard, his brothers left him, and prepared for a long and wary walk. Mrs. Day turned pale, and Fanny was very grave when the bustle of assembling their home forces began in the hall; when strips of something white were called for to be put round the hats, to distinguish friends from enemies; when pistols gleamed; and when deep voices from the court pronounced it a sharp, starlight night.

“Who is that tall man, James?” whispered Fanny, who was looking on from the stairs. “The one on the steps, I mean.”

“Who are you?” asked James, going up to the person.

It was Richard. Of course, he did not mean to stay behind, if his brothers chose to spoil sport. Thus, Fanny and Mrs. Day were to be left to listen from the windows, without the support of any person qualified to laugh at what was really foolish in their apprehensions. With chattering teeth, with shawls drawn over their heads, did they lean out of the window of the darkened drawing-room, trusting that, if there should be any shot, they should have notice of it from the face of the rock below.

The gentlemen and their servants proceeded first to Morse's cottage. He was not at home; but Alick was,—looking out of the window, as was the fashion this night. His father had gone out some time ago, he said, fancying, as he did every night, that he heard a noise somewhere. The wonder was that he was not back yet. Alick was pressed into the service to go and seek for him.

Nothing could be more exciting to the young men than their walk through the wood, treading cautiously on the thick strewn leaves, and mistaking every sigh of the gust among the naked boughs for the coming forth of an enemy from ambush. The stars, bright as they were, gave too little light to be of much service amidst the trees; and a guide was appointed from among the servants to lead the way to the woodman's cottage. When he reached the fence which surrounded it, he turned to whisper,

“They can’t be far off now, sir. There is a man up in that tree. If you will stand where I do, you will see him.”

“Come down, whoever you are!” said James. “Come down, or I’ll fire!”

“For mercy’s sake, sir, don’t!” cried a voice which had nothing very manly in it; and the dark form was seen to be descending with all speed.

“What was he doing there?” asked Richard, as a boy was pulled by the collar into his immediate presence. “Stealing walnuts! What brought you out, you little wretch, to steal walnuts?”

He had been told by his father to stay here till the party came past on their way home, lest he should get a mischief; and he thought he might as well be doing something, like the rest of them. He had tried the hen-roost first; but some of the party had been there before him, and there was nothing left for him but the walnuts; and they were only the gleanings, after the best part of the crop had been gathered. He had news to give of the keeper. He had seen him taken.—Taken?—Ay; skulking behind this cottage, to watch the poachers. It seemed to him that somebody from within had given notice that he was there. However that might be, Morse’s gun was taken from him, and he was carried off. Such was the story told by George Swallow.

The inmate of this cottage was sound asleep, if prodigious snoring might be taken as a test. He was not allowed further repose, but summoned to bring out his gun; and George Swallow was left tenant of the house,—tied by the leg to the bed-post.

If the gentlemen had come out in pursuit of game, they could have started none more tempting than the fine stag which, being roused from its lair, stood for an instant gazing on them from a distance of forty paces. Wallace had a cry of admiration ready as the graceful creature stood in the dim light; but before he could utter it,—before the animal could bound away, a perfectly aimed shot came from some other quarter; and instantly a large body of men crowded round the fallen stag. In vain was the signal of silence given by Mr. Cranston, and most earnestly propagated by Alick and the other woodman. Wallace shouted, James echoed him, and the servants followed. The poachers rushed forward. A gun was fired; by whom, and with what effect, nobody knew at the moment. A second shot ensued, whose consequences were immediately perceived by Mr. Cranston’s party. Alick sunk down with a cry like that of a woman. His father knew the voice, and sprang from among his captors to the side of his son. The fight which ensued was very harmless, the poachers perceiving that they were in no danger from such a handful of enemies. With the most provoking coolness, they retreated, carrying their game with them, and only laughing at the pursuit of their foes. If they would only have been angry, and gone on fighting, there would have been some consolation. But they would fight no more.

Neither did they sport any more; at least, not visibly nor audibly. As it was undesirable that they should be tracked to their place of carouse, and as it was necessary to cut up their venison into a more portable state, they retired behind Whitford’s granary, and there took up a strong position, rightly supposing that the

enemy would see no use or safety in watching them for any length of time. While knives were being plied with skill upon the venison, those who were not wanted for the work thought it a pity they should be idle. A sheep of Whitford's was abstracted from the flock by one detachment, while another sought the place where the granary had been last tapped, and drew a further supply of fine wheat which was pretty sure not to be missed. In these expeditions, it was a rule of morals to employ every man according to his capacity. Those who could neither kill game nor cut it up delicately were very capable of boring a hole in the floor of a loft full of corn, and, when the bag was filled, of stopping up the hole with a cork till next time. This done, all proved themselves capable of swearing fellowship and drinking more or less gin or other spirit in Swallow's office, whether or not they could sing such songs as frightened the twin sisters from their sleep in the farthest corner of the house.

On this occasion, the sisters were spared the panic suffered by Mrs. Day and Fanny, when a wounded man was brought in to be put to bed, and supposed dying till the surgeon could be summoned to see him. Fanny's satisfaction at her brothers' coming home safe was much impaired by the moodiness of their countenances, which seemed to betoken that the strife with their neighbours was not at an end.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter V.

VOWED SISTERHOOD.

Poor Alick Morse died in three days. The brothers did not wait for the event to show their determination to put down the practice of poaching in their neighbourhood. Several suspected persons at A— were brought up before the magistrates, the morning after the adventure; some of them being caught (before they had completely emerged from their drunken fit) with sheep's wool or grains of corn stuck with blood to their shoe-soles, or their hands blackened with powder, or smelling of venison. George Swallow was committed, with all ceremony; and the county was pledged to prosecute him for his theft of five walnuts. His father offered to whip him to any extent their worships might think proper; but it was decided that he should be consigned to vagabond society in gaol for a couple of months, and cause the county an expense of the requisite number of pounds, in order to his being finally condemned to four days' imprisonment. When poor Alick died, (after having been removed, by his father's peremptory desire, to his cottage,) Morse was much cheered by seeing his natural office of avenger of blood so well filled as it was by his two younger masters, who actually dogged the heels of the reluctant constable, to see that he did his duty in taking up the suspected. The only thing that vexed the gamekeeper was Mr. James's obstinacy in disbelieving that Swallow had anything to do in the affair. There was more reason for arresting Swallow than many another that was marched before their worships: but James quashed every hint in this man's disfavour; and Swallow might be seen exhibiting himself about his own premises with an air of triumph equally offensive to his accomplices and to him whom some believed him to have most deeply injured.

"Come, come, my poor fellow," said James to Morse, "let us have no more of this. I cannot listen to an information that has so little in it as yours. Tell me of anything else that I can do for you, Morse. Would it be a satisfaction to you that I should bury your son?"

Morse uncovered his grizzled locks, and a deeper red than usual burned in his jolly cheeks, as he acknowledged the young clergyman's kindness. He did not think Alick had supposed his young master would do him this honour, though the poor lad had brought himself to ask whether his father believed that a funeral sermon would be preached for him.

"There shall be one, certainly, if it will be any satisfaction to you. I should not wonder at your desiring it; but what could make Alick wish it?"

"He liked the idea that Sarah Swallow would hear him made much of, sir. In fact, sir, he left his silver-topped gin-bottle to the parson, if he made her cry at his funeral sermon. Hope no offence, sir?"

James had an idea that he had a better chance of making Sarah cry than any other parson in the world. He was pretty sure of the gin-bottle, if he chose to try for it: but he was heartily vexed that he had promised the sermon. While he was meditating his next evasion, Morse went on,—

“And since you have been so ready about the sermon, sir, perhaps you have no objection to be accommodating about the text?”

“None in the world,” replied James, hoping that the matter would end in the necessity of making Sarah laugh. “Let me hear.”

“Perhaps you remember, sir, the text about the soul—something about the bird and the snare of the fowler. My son thought that text would tell that the manner of his death was by poachers.”

“As if everybody did not know that already!” muttered James. “Well, Morse; make yourself easy.”

“And you may depend, sir, on having the gin-bottle on the Monday morning.”

“And when is the funeral to be, Morse?”

“Why, sir, they say it must be to-morrow, sir. The undertaker says so, sir; or else—”

“To-morrow! D—n it!” muttered James. “Wallace and I had fixed to-morrow for a morning’s shooting; and it is the last day we shall have this week. Morse, did your master say he could spare you to-morrow?”

“He did, sir. I am as sorry as you can be to spoil sport in such a way. But the undertaker is positive.”

“Then there is no help for it. I am not going back from my word, Morse.”

It was a most delicious morning for sport. James came down with a countenance as black as night. Wallace was making ready to go forth. He only waited to know whether James meant to meet him in A—, some hours hence, on business relating to these poachers. Certainly. James thought he might as well get two irksome engagements fulfilled in one day. He would meet Wallace at the Turk’s Head in the afternoon.

“Bless me! I’m late, I suppose,” cried he. “Here’s poor Morse himself coming to look after me. That punch was so confoundedly strong last night, I could not wake for the life of me this morning. Coming, Morse. I’m sorry if I’m late; but I dare say you have got a methodist or two from A—, and they will entertain your company with a hymn till we get up to beat their cover. Don’t hurry yourself, my poor fellow.”

“By no means, sir. But what I came for was—I hate to spoil sport, sir, and it is a rare morning; and so, sir, if you will make me sure of the sermon, I’ll let you off this morning’s work, and secure you the gin-bottle, all the same.”

“Now I call that kind, Morse.”

“And when I have seen him earthed, sir—”

“Ah! you will hardly know what to do with yourself. Suppose you look for the text you mentioned; and by the time you have found it for me, we shall have something to amuse you with—about what is done with the poachers at A—.”

It did not appear, in the sequel, that looking out texts was precisely the occupation that best suited Morse, even on this occasion. As Fanny and Mrs. Day were walking, a little after noon, in a field at some distance from the park, they saw Morse, with his gun on his arm, and his dog snuffing about at a little distance. Fanny’s feelings for the bereft father would have led her to avoid intruding upon him to-day; but he bent his steps towards her. He evidently meant to accost her, and she therefore broke the ice.

“What brought you here, Morse? Where have you been walking?”

“I’ve been no farther than Lye Wood. I’ve been to my son’s funeral not far from there; and I thought I would try the cover as I came back. Now I’ve happened to meet you, ladies, I am glad I let off the young parson from the funeral. He would have been with me, as I’ve taken the sporting circuit instead of the straight road; and it is of him that I am going to speak. No harm, or no great harm,” said he to Mrs. Day, who had turned pale through some undefined apprehension of evil. “No greater harm, ladies, than his making love down yonder; making love, as all young men do.”

“What do you mean? Making love to whom? What sort of person is she?” hastily inquired Mrs. Day.

“You may guess it is to no unfitting person,” replied Morse; “for my poor son meant to have had her himself, if he had but lived. ’Tis Sarah Swallow that I mean; and all I tell you for is, that he may not make her his lady, as the folks have it he means to do. Her father looks boastful enough to put it into every one’s head; and I myself saw them in the gig together when, it is my belief, she had been to view his new house, where he will be taking her to live, one of these days, if you don’t look to it.”

“I was pretty sure he was in love,” said Fanny. “I have thought so this fortnight past.”

“Breast-high,” observed Morse.

“This young person must be sent away immediately,” declared Mrs. Day. “We must speak to Mr. Cranston directly, Fanny, and get it done.”

“You will hardly manage that,” said Fanny, “unless the girl has done something wrong. How can we send her away? What right have we to quarrel with her having a lover?”

“The scent will lie too strong; you’ll never break it. He will start after her,” solemnly declared Morse.

“But, Fanny, you would not send away your brother; you would not attempt it, if you consider this new living that he has to attend to. Besides, I believe he would not go.”

“Certainly not, if he is in love. Why send away either of them? Why roughen the course of true love?”

“My dear, think of the consequences! You are so strangely wild, Fanny, sometimes. Think of the consequences, if they stay in the same neighbourhood,—one of the Mr. Cranstons marrying the daughter of a country horse-dealer!”

Fanny thought the real wildness and folly was in people’s loving one person and marrying another. If James and Sarah loved each other, she, for one, should not dare to interfere between them. Once convinced of the fact of their attachment, she would offer herself as a sister to Sarah Swallow, even if Sarah were herself a horse-dealer, and rode to the fair at the end of a string of her own quadrupeds.

“I suppose, then, you will be for going to vow sisterhood with this girl, this moment,” said Mrs. Day, with much vexation in her tone. “You will do your best to assist the scandal against your family, Fanny.”

“I shall vow nothing till I know whether they are in love. If they are—(I put it to you, Mrs. Day)—if they are in love, which is the greater scandal—that the wedded in heart should be wedded in hand, or that he should break this poor girl’s heart, and give his hand to somebody else?”

“You do not choose to look into consequences, Fanny; you will not, or you would see what would become of society, if young men of family are to marry in such a way, on pretence of being in love.”

Fanny would not allow the word “pretence.” Pretence is not used to secure disadvantages—of alliance or anything else. She also declared that she did look very far into consequences,—into the cold married life of the lover, and the dreary lot of the deserted, and all the crimes which must be perpetrated on all hands before hearts that cling can be separated.

“But, my dear, only look at what will happen in such a case as this. The—”

“I see,—the endless troubles of a horse-dealer’s daughter in polished society; (for I suppose we Cranstons are more or less polished in London, however wild we may be here.) I grant you all these troubles; but they are better than broken or hardened hearts. Depend upon it, Mrs. Day, these are cases for prevention, not cure.”

“What else have I been saying, Fanny? I want to send her away before it is too late.”

“It is too late, in this case,—always provided that they really love. God has joined them, and I will not help to put them asunder. What I mean about prevention and cure is, that people should be prepared to love in the right place—where there is equality, not of rank, but of mind. Till then, I am for love—true love—leading on to marriage, sooner or later, as naturally as dawn leads on to perfect day.”

“But I have no doubt this is a mere fancy of your brother’s,—a mere pastime while he is in the country.”

“Ah! that is altogether another question. I agree with you that it is far too likely: but in that case, it is particularly necessary that I should make a friend of this good girl; for I am sure she is a good girl.”

“She is, Miss Cranston,” averred Morse.

“I may save her from a bitter disappointment, or prepare her, in some degree, for it,” added Fanny. “But, Mrs. Day, I rather think my brothers, and thousands more, would never dream of such cruel sport—would have no such fancies—if it was a natural and a settled thing that they should marry where they love.”

“So you are going to run down to this young person, and put it into her head that it is her duty and your brother’s that they should marry!”

“If that is not in her head already, Mrs. Day, she will spurn me for trying to put it there, you may be quite sure, if Sarah has the true woman’s heart; and she is too young to have a more sophisticated one. I am going; but I am afraid you will not be my companion.”

“Certainly not, till I have spoken to Mr. Cranston.”

“Poor Richard!” thought Fanny; “it would be rather burdensome to him to have to alter the laws of nature, to evade the talk of our London acquaintance. I don’t think Mrs. Day will persuade him to try.—Good-bye, Mrs. Day. If this news is not true, perhaps I shall be as glad as you; if it is true, I really advise you to try to be as content as I shall be, and (I think I may say) Richard too.”

Of course, Mrs. Day shook her head. She turned back in the direction of Fellbrow; while Fanny proceeded towards the Paddock—not with her usual step, but sometimes lingering under the hedges, and sometimes hastening. Her heart was in a kind of tumult,—now fluttering with pleasure—a new kind of pleasure—at the idea of a brother being in love, (an event which she had long looked for in vain in Richard’s case,) and now full of anxiety lest there should be a lowness of heart and mind, as well as of birth, in Sarah, which should injure or extinguish the love. Fanny was a somewhat partial sister; and she was not aware how essentially vulgar was the mind of him before whom heads were uncovered, as if, because he was a clergyman, he must be a wise and good man.

Fanny was herself surprised at the time she had lost when the church clock of A— gave out the hour, just as she had succeeded in dragging down a lofty hazel-bough, and in obtaining the last nut that danced in the air with it. She reproached herself duly for the divers blackberry stains she had incurred, and crossed the last stile of Whitford’s fields, into the road which led to the Paddock and to A—. Here she walked on with all sobriety, pondering the ground rather than the high hazel-boughs, till she was roused by a shout of many voices—a din which alarmed her. Looking up, she saw the twins, preceded by Fido, flying along the road towards her; while, some

way behind them, just at the entrance of the town, appeared a rushing crowd, from which proceeded the clamour. The girls eagerly waved to her to turn back, and were evidently exhausting their own strength in flight. "An over-driven bullock," thought Fanny, turning, and making for the stile she had crossed. She reached and passed it; and then, supposing herself in a perfectly safe place, she leaned over to make a signal to the girls that here their flight might end. They could not speak when they approached; but they made vehement signs that she must not stand there. It was, indeed, a dog, and not a bullock, that was being chased. She saw the creature making along the road, and could recognize the peculiar carriage which denoted its madness. She was in agony for the exhausted girls, who were actually stumbling amidst their attempts to reach the stile. The dog might take it into his head to fly at them over, or through, the stile; but it was worth any exertion to get them out of the direct path of the animal. She stood on the middle rail, and stretched out her arms to them; while Fido leaped backwards and forwards between her and them. They made another effort, when they heard from her the words—"A barn! here is a barn!" One reached and threw herself upon her, was dragged over, and fell on the grass; the other, Sarah, was somewhat stronger, and helped to lift up Anne, and pull her towards the barn, whose wide doors stood open. The thresher was wondering what all this could mean, when he stopped work, so as to hear something besides his own flail. The dog appeared, leaping through the stile, and explained everything. The girls were rudely pushed into the barn, and the doors closed upon them. Fido would not come in. "Tie him up! tie him up!" cried Sarah through the door. "Ay, ay," answered the thresher from without. They hoped that Fido was safe at the back of the building; and were spared the sight of the dashing out of the mad creature's brains by the flail of the thresher.

"Do give us air," cried Fanny, when he put his head in to tell them all was safe. "These girls seem suffocating. May we have the doors open?"

Each pretty creature lay panting on the great heap of straw, while their friend fanned them with her hat; they looking as if they would intreat her not to trouble herself, if they could but find voice. How fresh came in the cool air,—how bright did the pale sunshine look,—when the doors were once more thrown wide! When the crowd were convinced that nothing more was to be expected from the dog, and that the best chance of amusement lay in finding out how many people he might have bitten in the town, the field was presently cleared, and the thresher returned to the barn.

While wiping his flail, preparatory to using it again, he growled and grumbled about the danger from mad dogs, and its increase of late. In his young days, nobody thought of dogs being mad later in the year than September. We should soon be subject to them all the year round, he supposed.

Fanny supposed this individual dog had been driven mad by some particular accident or ill-usage. As for the rest, how was it to be helped? Did the thresher mean to say that it was any body's fault that there were more mad dogs than formerly?

"Ay, ay," replied the thresher. "If dogs were taxed as they should be, they would not swarm as they do in the dog-days."

“But I thought there was abundance of taxation of dogs: I am sure my brothers pay as much for theirs as would maintain a poor man’s family. There is a duty of six-and-thirty pounds on their pack of hounds, in the first place; and then fourteen shillings a-head on all their other dogs, which are not a few.”

“Very well—very right,” observed the thresher. “Your brothers are not the gentlemen to grumble at paying for luxuries, I dare say, any more than these young ladies have hitherto grudged their pound a year for the pretty creature behind there,” nodding towards the back of the barn. The girls looked at one another, not having been aware that the possession of Fido would bring upon Sarah or her father the expense of a pound a year duty.

Fanny thought nothing could be more proper than that her brothers should pay duty for their luxuries, whether of dogs, horses, or any thing else. If they grew displeased with the expense, they had only to give up the indulgence, which was more than the poor man could do in regard to the taxed articles used by him. She only mentioned what her brothers paid because the thresher seemed to think dogs were not sufficiently taxed.

The thresher thought so still. He did not want that dogs used for such real and useful service as his boy’s dog on the sheep-walk above should be taxed. When Mr. Taplin had tried to make out, last appeal day, that that dog belonged to Mr. Whitford, and ought to pay duty, the thresher had successfully opposed him, and the Commissioners had decided that a shepherd’s dog used in the shepherd’s business, should be exempt. But it was a very different thing, allowing dogs to go free of duty because they belong to the poor; and letting a vast number go unaccounted for in compounding for taxes. If poor men keep dogs for a luxury, let them pay more or less for this luxury, since it is one that brings mischief after it if too extensively used; and it is not difficult to draw the line between these dogs and those which help the poor man in his occupation,—such as butchers’ and drovers’ dogs.

“I am sure,” said Fanny, “I have seen hundreds of dogs in London, whose masters can pay no tax, to judge by the plight of the poor animals.”

“Just so, ma’am. Half-starved and neglected as they are, they roam the streets just in a condition to turn mad as soon as hot weather comes; and as this is a sort of luxury that cannot be left to the poor man with safety to his neighbours, it is only fair, in my opinion, to put some restraint upon it. I would let the charge of eight shillings a year lie on all the inferior kinds of dogs but those used in business; and to make sure, every dog should by law have a collar with his master’s name upon it, and the place where the duty is paid. If this was done, and the constables had power to destroy all dogs that have no collars, and that are not owned after due notice, we should hear little more of deaths from mad dogs, and the government would find its profit,—and a fair profit,—from such a plan.”

“There would be more to pay the duty, you think, as well as fewer to keep dogs?”

“No doubt of it, ma’am. Mr. Taplin says the number of dogs accounted for to the assessors in this country is between three and four hundred thousand, besides packs of hounds,—which are about seventy. Now it is pretty sure that, of the many thousands more that the assessors cannot touch, some good number would pay duty, instead of all being put out of the way.”

“There would be a prodigious slaughter of lurchers, I fancy,” said Fanny, “to the great displeasure of poachers, and of some who make their dogs do business, though the business may not be accounted for to the assessor. One cannot go ten yards in this neighbourhood without seeing a lurcher. I suppose it is that dog’s cunning that makes it so common near gentlemen’s seats, and in poor men’s service.”

The thresher turned suddenly to his work again; and the girls arose. They were all the sooner ready to go for poaching having been mentioned.

“If you will just tell me where you tied up my dog,” said Sarah, after duly thanking the thresher.

“O, just behind there; you can’t miss him. I dare say he is dead and half-cold by this time.”

“Dead!” murmured both the girls. The thresher turned round quickly.

“Why, you bade me tie him up, did not you? What would you have?”

“He has hanged the dog!” cried Fanny. “O, how could you do so?”

The thresher was all amazement. He had supposed that the young ladies were afraid of their own dog after it had been in company with the mad one, and he had saved them the trouble of hanging it; that was all.—A kind of trouble he seemed disposed to save the constable, Fanny thought. Had he drowned any pups, this day?—He could not say but he had,—before he came to work in the morning.—If the thresher went on at this rate, drowning pups in the morning, and slaying two dogs at noon, this district was likely to be pretty safe during his life. Fanny would take good care, however, to keep her spaniel out of reach of his cruel hands.

“O, his cruel hands!” repeated Sarah, catching the last words as she reappeared from behind the barn, whither she and her sister had run to see if poor Fido had any life left in him. The first glance at the suspended animal, in an attitude of convulsion, was too much for Sarah. Anne ran on to cut him down with a sickle she had seized in the barn. Sarah returned, and threw herself at length on the straw, hiding her face, and sobbing till even the thresher’s soul was moved.

Lord love her! how her fright about the mad dog must have shaken her! There is no mischief that may not be mended, more or less, wise folks say; and he would get her another greyhound, if she would not take on so. Nothing easier than to get a pretty pup of a greyhound for her; and he would christen it Fido, like the last. He would christen it himself: for all he was known not to be overfond of encouraging dogs.

“You!” cried Sarah, with flashing eyes. “You bring me a dog! It shall go straight into the pond if you do.—But it was all my own fault,—for letting you touch him.—I wish—I wish he had been bitten, and that he had bitten me again, before I asked you to touch him.—I will never have another dog as long as I live!”

“O, yes, you will,” whispered Fanny; “you will take another from the same hand that gave you this.”

“O, Miss Cranston,” wept poor Sarah, “he will never give me another; and I shall have no heart to take it, after having used this in such a way.—How shall I tell him?—I’m sure I hope he will not come to the Paddock to-day.”

“Yes, he will. Let us go and be ready for him.”

“Did he say he should come? Did he tell you—” —Sarah’s blushing face now looked infinitely less miserable.

“You must tell me,—yes, everything,” said Fanny, smiling. “There is nobody in the field now. Come and take a walk with me.”

The thresher was furiously at work as they left the barn without remembering to say another word to him. He swore to himself that the young gentlemen were welcome to try to please pretty girls, if they chose. He had had enough of it. There was nothing to be got but abuse for doing just what they desired.

Anne was the next person to be discontented. When she had completely tired herself with attempts to resuscitate Fido, with a vague idea in her mind that she was doing something generous, she came back to her companions, with a heavy heart and a faltering tongue, to tell that poor Fido was irrecoverable. She found Sarah smiling consciously, and looking the picture of happiness, while Miss Cranston’s arm was round her waist, and it was plain that neither of them was in any want of her, or in any distress about Fido. She was about to turn in and scold the thresher, as the most natural way of letting off her wrath, when Miss Cranston called her.

“Come, Anne, we want you. You are Sarah’s only sister. We want your leave that she may have another.”

“O, Anne!” said her sister, in sorrowful reproach, when Anne silently turned her head away to disperse her tears.

“Indeed, I don’t mean—,” —Anne declared,—“I was only taken by surprise. We did not know, Miss Cranston, what it was right to expect,—what you might think—”

Miss Cranston did not answer for any one but herself. How matters were to stand with her she did not leave doubtful. If James had taken Sarah to see the new house, and learn her wishes about its arrangements, she could not be wrong in taking Sarah thither once more, to hear what had been planned, and how she might help to advance everybody’s wishes.

How rapid are the changes of feeling that all are subject to; and how the most interesting communion of friends may be instantly transformed into a mere contagion of mirth! An exclamation escaped from all the three girls, as a hare burst from the dry ditch beside which they were walking, and made across the field. On passing the barn, she seemed to be taken possession of by a sudden thought. She turned and sprang in upon the very heap of straw on which Sarah and her sister had reposed from their terrors of the chase.—At that moment, two pointers sprang through the hedge, and followed precisely on her track, while Wallace appeared in a gap, and James's voice was heard behind the fence.

With quivering lips, Sarah entreated that nothing might be said of Fido; and she was assured in return that James would be too eager about this hare to remember the greyhound, so that she might keep the topic for some occasion when she could privately explain the whole to James, and when she would be better able to bear the subject than at present. James had no attention to spare for the ladies till he had ascertained why his dogs fidgetted about the barn in so strange a manner. He seemed to be peremptory with the thresher as to which way the hare was gone, while the man looked more sulky than ever. Instead of wasting words upon him, Wallace made bold to search; and in a minute, the poor animal was exhibited,—its skull having been fractured with his very handy and diligent flail, and the carcass pushed in beneath the straw. The poor thresher seemed likely to have no rest from animadversion this day. One brother now threatened him with an information for killing the animal sacred to the qualified, while the other heaped curses upon him for spoiling the sport. No wonder the thresher pronounced his neighbours hard to please. He was not even allowed to keep the hare,—“to roast the game that he had killed.” James wanted it,—of course for Sarah; and then came a race about the field, he trying to throw the carcass, as if it had been a tippet, over her shoulders, and she naturally wishing to escape such an adornment. She was happily looking away in a struggle to escape, when he said—

“You had better have brought Fido with you. He would have carried your game home. As it is, you see I shall be obliged to go with you myself. Now, don't you think that is very hard?”

Fanny explained that she was going to carry off Sarah from Fellbrow for a long ride, instead of letting her go home with her game. James must now be satisfied why he found the three girls together like sisters; and it was not long before he was walking between Fanny and Sarah, talking of his new house.

“Do you know, Fanny,” said he,—“(hold your tongue Sarah, I told you I would make them laugh at you;) do you know, Fanny, she would have my house built after the fashion of a shopkeeper's house in the city. She thought of nothing but a room or two on the ground-floor, and others built over them,—and more piled up till we had got as many as we wanted; with a window stuck here and there wherever we could not possibly do without one. That is Sarah's notion of a house.”

Sarah declared that she did not wish the house to be anything but what Mr. Cranston liked. She was only looking for the house being something like the new ones on the new road.

“Not knowing the why and because of the case, my dear. Houses run up like maypoles where ground rents are high: (which is reason enough, Fanny, why the house-tax should not proceed upon a measurement of square feet, as some would have it;) and, as for windows, what can be the reason, do you suppose, that there are not as many in our new houses as at Fellbrow, where the walls are chequered with lattices? Is it because Fellbrow is particularly ugly, do you think?”

Sarah had little to say in praise of the beauty of either the many-windowed Fellbrow mansion, or the new houses where a window appeared here and there amidst an expanse of red brick.

We might all think there was most beauty in a proportion between the two, Fanny conjectured, if all were at liberty to consult their taste. But Richard had told her that it was owing to the window-tax that those architects were the most popular who put the smallest possible number of windows into their plans for building. Thus, we might arrive in time at a national preference for dead wall. But Fanny could not bear the idea of English streets looking like those of Damascus and other eastern cities, where you may walk for a mile in an avenue of blank edifices.

James laughed at the notion of such an evasion of taxes as this. The people of England must become poor indeed, if they denied themselves light and air to avoid a duty of sixteen shillings and sixpence upon the lowest,—viz., a house of eight windows,—and of no more than thirty pounds upon the palace of a hundred windows. The people must, before this, become as poor as Sarah must suppose him to be, judging from her anxiety to have his house as dark as she could persuade him to make it.

Sarah had had no such thought as of his being poor. She only judged from the way that houses were often built now. It must be very bad for the poor, (who are seldom disposed to be too cleanly,) to be stinted in air and light. She wished the days would return when houses might be half made of glass, like that at Fellbrow.

“I do not,” said James: “for there was a worse tax then. The window-tax indeed was laid on to relieve us from that. There was a tax of two shillings on every hearth, Sarah. Only think of the bore of having a tax-gatherer come round, insisting upon going into every room, to see how many hearths there were! It struck somebody that if windows were made to pay, instead of hearths, the tax-gatherer might walk round the outside to count them; which was infinitely less disagreeable than his presence within. At that time, the poor were not very heavily burdened by it, and now they are not so burdened at all. Houses with no more than seven windows then paid twopence a window; and now they pay nothing. So, for once, you may spare your pity for the poor on account of a tax. This does not touch them.”

“Then I call it a good tax,” declared Fanny. “Richard shall pay his share without any murmurs, as he does for his hounds and his horses, if he means to begin his housekeeping with a good grace. It makes me quite uncomfortable to think that we pay no more tax upon every pound of soap or sugar than the poorest of Whitford’s labourers. There is some comfort in paying for something,—even if it be light and air,—which may come to them free. I like this window-tax. It seems, too, as if it must be fair towards those on whom it does fall, if it rises with the number of windows.”

“It is not so, however. A tenant who takes a 10*l.* house in A—, an old-fashioned house in one of those half-deserted streets, may have to pay for sixteen windows, while a London shopkeeper, in a 70*l.* house, in a first-rate situation, may have to pay only for ten windows. This is not fair. I like the tax in so far as it is direct,—a prime virtue in a tax,—and because it falls on none below the middling classes; but I cannot call it equal.”

“Why, no: the London shopkeeper ought to pay more instead of less (whether his house be modern or old-fashioned) for living in a good situation. But, to be sure, he does this in his rent, and, I suppose, in his house-tax. And yet it seems as if the landlord must at last pay both the house-tax and the window-tax. How is it? It is a great puzzle.”

“Not at all. When a man is choosing a house, he takes the expense of the whole into consideration,—the rent, and the house-tax, and the window-tax. The tenant of the house with many windows in A— would have taken a house with fewer windows, if he had not been tempted by the lowness of the rent; and the London shopkeeper finds himself able to pay a higher rent for his house than he could have done if it had been more abundant in windows. Thus, though the tenants may pay the tax into the collector’s hand, it falls upon the landlords. The one landlord obtains a lower rent because his windows are many; and the other a higher rent because his windows are few.”

“Then, if this tax were to be taken off, it would relieve the landlords, not the tenants?”

“When the tenant’s leases had expired. Till then, the tenant would pocket the amount of the tax; but, the lease expired, the rent would rise. If the tenant could before afford to pay so much to live in this particular house, he will pay it again rather than quit a situation which suits him. But there is one way in which the tenant will gain. He can have more air and light.”

“And families who live in their own old houses in the country,—families who are not rich enough to afford themselves many luxuries,—would find the relief great. If Fellbrow had been left to fall into ruins because we were poor, and not because we were wild,—if we had come back to live cheap,—we should have found the window-tax a great burden, and should be glad to be rid of it.”

“Yes: it is not nearly so good a tax as its companion, the house-tax.”

“I hope, however,” said Sarah, “some other tax that falls upon the poor will be taken off first. It is a pity that landlords should pay unequally for their windows; but I think it is far worse that the poor should pay as much for some things as any landlord. But I suppose these taxes will make your house worth more than it would be worth without them.”

“In general, the value of houses must be raised by these taxes, because it will not be worth while to build till the ground-rent is high enough to pay the taxes as well as remunerate the landlord. But much depends upon situation, you see. The ground-rent of my new house is very low, because it stands in a situation that nobody cares about but myself; and the ground-rent of a house in the Strand is very high, because people bid against one another for the advantage of living in the Strand. If the taxes were taken off to-morrow, the value of the houses in the Strand would not be lowered till the Strand began to be deserted for some other great thoroughfare.”

“But if the taxes were to be taken off to-morrow, the value of your house would be lowered.”

“If I had not secured my bargain with the ground-landlord. If we were only beginning our negotiation, he would say, ‘You will be at so much less expense for your house than you calculated upon and can afford; and you must therefore pay me more for your ground.’ But Sarah knows that my house is too far advanced for any such speech to be made to me.”

“Besides that the taxes remain.”

“For how long? You know what an outcry there is about them in London?”

“From landlords or tenants?”

“From tenants chiefly;—from shopkeepers who will pocket the amount of tax for the time their leases have to run, and will then be just where they are now.”

“But they ought not to be indulged, while so many worse burdens are pressing on a larger and more suffering class. They surely ought not to be indulged.”

“Not as to the repeal of the house-tax, which is, if people would but examine and judge, perhaps the very best tax we have. But then, it wants to be equalized. The London shopkeepers are right enough in saying that. But its being unequally laid on is no reason for its being taken off altogether.”

“How does it want to be made equal? between houses of a different rank in London? or between houses of the same rank in London and in the country?”

“Chiefly between houses of a different rank, in London and in the country. It seems to me ridiculous to make such prodigious complaints as we hear about the enormous amount levied on London in comparison with the country. London may measure no more miles than there may be seen lying below my new house; but the property of London is more than our whole county; and the property on which the tax is levied is

the question; not the space within which it is levied. The number of houses assessed in London and Middlesex is above 116,000; and in the county of Rutland 240.”

“People must pay for the privilege of living in London,—for the thousands of comforts and conveniences which are to be had there only. Here, if people want to send letters a few miles, two or three times a-day, they must dispatch two or three messengers, for want of a twopenny post. If they want to buy meat, they must go a good way to a butcher, and take the chance of getting what they want, if it be not market-day, instead of having an universally-stocked market at hand every day of the week. If they want to ride any distance, they must hire horses, for want of omnibuses and stages; and they have none of the luxuries of fine buildings, inexhaustible libraries, and the best of pictures, and of music, and of theatrical and other exhibitions at hand. O, people ought to pay for living in London.”

“And the most natural way is to pay in rent, and therefore in house-tax also. In as far as the country improves,—as provincial towns approach more nearly to the glory of London,—rents and house-tax will rise much more certainly than by any law that shall attempt to equalize them with the metropolis. I would not interfere between the shop-owner of Charing-Cross and the shop-owner of A—. The real grievance lies between the noblemen of Charing-Cross and of Yorkshire, and the landlord of a shop in the Strand. While the shop-owner pays a house-duty of 80*l.* a-year, and the peer in the park no more, and another peer in his country palace less than half, there is certainly ample room for complaint.”

“Without proving that the tax itself is bad. I should think some test of value, other than the rent they would bring, might be found out for those country palaces which, with all their splendour and convenience, might be difficult to let. Very rich men would not mind having the value of one article of their property ascertained, in order to be taxed, however disagreeable the inquisition may be to a less wealthy man, whose credit depends on the amount of his property. The house-tax would become a property-tax in this way.”

“It is a property-tax already; and therefore a tax of the best kind; and therefore to be parted with only when swallowed up in a general property-tax. Yet I am afraid it will be parted with, on account of the clamour of people who live near enough to the Treasury to make their clamour seem very terrible. If the sum which will then be taken off—”

“How much?”

“The house and window taxes together are between two and three millions.”

“That would go a great way towards relieving the poor of some really bad taxes, and particularly if great houses were taxed as they should be, so as to allow of more reduction in a right place.”

“Besides that the excise,—the really bad taxes, some of which press so heavily on the poor,—cost such an amazing deal to collect, that the saving in taking them off would be much more than the amount that comes into the Treasury.”

“If the house-tax is taken off,” said Fanny, “I shall persuade Richard to rebel at not being asked for it, as vehemently as some people in London threaten to rebel for a contrary reason. I should like to see a higher tax laid upon Fell-brow. I think we do not pay our share.”

“You have nothing to do but to give Mr. Taplin a hint to that effect. He will be very thankful for it.”

“Why?”

“He will gain a per centage upon the increase. These surveyors of the assessed taxes have so much per cent. upon all that they can lay hold of, which would not have been paid but for their exertions.”

“That is what makes Mr. Taplin so disliked,” Sarah observed. “He squeezes every shilling he can get from people who do not know how to answer him, or resist him.”

“Let them come to Richard,” cried Fanny. “He knows the law. He will help them, I am sure.”

“He cannot,” said James. “There is nothing for it but applying in person to the Commissioners; and many people do not think the matter is mended by going to the Commissioners at all.”

“But Richard might keep Mr. Taplin in awe.”

“That depends on whether Taplin has most reason to wish to stand well with Richard or to have his per centage on increases. He will soon be taxing you for Fido, Sarah. I will answer for it he has Fido down in his memorandum-book already.”

Fanny dreaded a burst of grief from Sarah; but she did not know Sarah’s power of self-command, or appreciate the strength of the motive to keep back the sad tale till the lovers should be alone. Wallace had sauntered near them, so as to hear the last sentence, and be struck with a bright idea in consequence.

“What do you think I have a good mind to do?” said he to Anne. “It would be capital fun to send an anonymous letter,—very solemn,—to Taplin, to bid him look to your sister’s dog, and tell him of half a hundred more taxable articles that she never had or will have.”

“O, don’t do it, Mr. Wallace! You will make him so angry, and my father, too!”

“And then,” pursued Wallace, “she will have to come before the Commissioners to tell her story, and—”

“O, Mr. Wallace, pray do not!” entreated Anne.

The more alarmed she looked, the more Wallace was amused with the idea of bringing up, not only Sarah, but half the neighbourhood, before the Commissioners. He suspected that Taplin’s avarice about his per centages would carry him a great way in demanding what he had no right to. In answer to her “Pray do not,” Anne obtained a “Well, well,” which satisfied her. In all innocence, she allowed him to extract from her everything she knew about the little concerns of her acquaintance among the small housekeepers of A—, and the cottages on Whitford’s lands. She was charmed by Mr. Wallace’s close interest in such trifles, and so engrossed by it that her father’s voice startled her when he called to her over the hedge. He was mounted, leading a string of horses which he was conducting to a fair at some distance. As George was otherwise engaged, it was necessary for the girls to be at home to keep the books, he said, and they had been out a very long time. Where was Sarah?

When Anne looked round, Sarah and her companions were not to be seen. Till lately, nothing so wonderful had ever happened as that the one sister should not know where the other was, or should have to go home alone. Wallace’s gallantry was exhausted. After explaining the improbability of Anne’s meeting another mad dog this day, he loaded his piece, and declared he must have a turn through yonder cover before he showed himself in A—, though the hour for business appointed by himself was already past. He supposed James was there; and he would serve the purpose at present. If James was gone elsewhere after his amusement, why the people at A— must wait a little.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VI.

BATTLES AT NAVARINO.

“Who said James was at his living?” asked Fanny of her brother Richard, as she sat at a window of the Navarino, waiting till he should have settled his business with the surveyor and the commissioners, and be at liberty to finish his walk with her. “Who said James was at his house this morning?”

“Not I,” said Richard. “I know nothing about him. Where is he?”

“Riding over the moor with the Lees. You may see them from this window. Now look? Just turning down towards Bray Fells. He wants to show Mary Lee that ride under the crags; and they could not have a finer morning.”

“When did the Lees come? I heard nothing of their being here.”

“They only arrived yesterday; and they will be off to town again in a month. They spend Christmas here, that is all. Mary Lee little expected such weather as this,—little expected any rides so near Christmas, I should think.”

“James will take care that she has one every day, I dare say, while the roads are in their present state. He will make the most of a party of friends while they are to be had. How long are we to be kept here, I wonder?”

“There is no knowing. There is quite a little crowd below, and more are coming up every minute. If all these people are here on business, like you, there is no telling when it will be done.” Leaning forward to whisper, she added, “The Swallows are here, I see. Let me ask the girls to this window. I want you to see Sarah. I don’t call it seeing her, to sit in the park, and take a curtsey from her as she passes.”

Nor did Richard: but he did not wish to be aiding and abetting in deceiving the poor girl. From this hour James’s head would be full of Miss Lee—

“Of Mary Lee! he never cared for her in London.”

“Because he was taken up with other things then. At Fellbrow, he fell in love for want of better amusement—”

“If I thought that—”—cried Fanny.

“I do not mean but that he would be as angry as you, if he heard me say so. He is fully persuaded,—at least he was yesterday,—that he has lost his heart in that direction,” glancing towards the girls; “but before Christmas-day, he will find that he has it to lose again.”

Fanny spoke not another word. She repeated again and again to herself how glad she was that she had warned Sarah against the infirmity of some of James's purposes, though she had believed as fully as Sarah herself that he was really in love. She had prepared Sarah for his house never being finished,—for his betaking himself to the turf when he should be tired of the field,—for his putting a curate into his living, and carrying Sarah to London, never perhaps to visit A—again: but that he would give up Sarah,—that is, that he did not really love her, was a danger that Fanny herself had not anticipated since she had witnessed the courtship. Her spirits were sunk fathoms deep in a moment.

It was Sarah who had said that James was to be at his living this morning. She could not go with him, because she had to appear before the commissioners to plead against paying duty for the dog she had lost. She was now not in the best spirits. The errand hither was not a pleasant one: her grief for Fido was still fresh; and a strange trouble connected with him was in her mind. James had not been half so angry, or half so sorry, as she had expected, when she told him, the day before, of Fido's fate. She had dreaded his anger so much that she was not sorry that he had been detained by his clerical duties all Sunday, and that Monday was a pouring rain, so that she did not see him. Yet on Tuesday, when she told him, she was as much surprised at his indifference as he was at her tears. He could easily get her another dog, he said; and she had been almost as much offended at the words as when the thresher had said the same thing. As if another could be the first gift! She was not much cheered at this moment by what she saw from the window,—the riding party lightly winning its way over the moor towards the very rocks whose echoes—O, what had not been confided to those echoes! But he was coming this afternoon, to consult her about a Christmas feast he was planning for the poor people in his parish, and then she should hear who these gentry were, and why he was obliged to ride with them. What a bustle there was below!

The Navarino indeed looked something like the rallying point of a host of hoaxed persons. When the commissioners arrived, they saw at a glance that to-day they must not dawdle about for a quarter of an hour, hat in hand, and yawn, and go away again, but prepare for the transaction of real business. Was there a rebellion against Taplin and his customary charges? or had an informer been stimulating Taplin to make new charges which were to be resisted?

“Let Swallow speak first,” said Richard. “His time is more precious than mine.”

“Whose is not?” asked his sister, laughing.

It ended in every body's business being dispatched before Richard's. His main occupation,—that of observing men and manners,—proceeded, however, to his satisfaction.

“Mine is a very extraordinary case, gentlemen,” pleaded Swallow. “The surveyor fixes the assessment of my premises at 70*l.* Gentlemen, I was never asked for more than 20*l.* till now.”

Taplin thought he ought to be very thankful for escaping the larger payment so long. His ranges of stables,—all his large back premises,—had been hitherto overlooked, and the house alone charged for.

The plan of the premises was produced. Swallow insisted that there was no connexion whatever between the house and the back premises;—merely that the house-door opened under the gateway. No witnesses could be heard as to the supposed value of the property compared with the neighbouring houses, or as to any of the points Swallow wished to establish. The rent of the entire estate was sworn to, and that the house was not considered separate from the back premises on any occasion but when the house-tax was to be levied. Swallow's case was pronounced a bad one. He must pay the 70*l*. Swallow was very cross,—declaring that taxation was enough to ruin any man. No man was more burdened than he. His very calling was taxed. Who else, he wondered, but horse-dealers, paid 12*l*. 10*s*. a-year for following their business?

“Come, come; that won't do,” said Taplin. “We all know well enough that it is your customers that pay that tax, and your interest upon your 12*l*. 10*s*. 'Tis a very good tax; and you won't succeed in making people discontented with it. If every thirteen thousand pounds of tax was as pleasantly raised as that, we assessors should hear few complaints.”

“Move off, sir, unless you have any other complaint to make,” said one of the commissioners to Swallow.

“I have, sir. Here is a charge of a pound for a dog of my daughter's. Neither of my daughters has a dog; as they are both here to testify.”

“A pound charged! A greyhound then. Will these young ladies swear that they have not been in possession of a greyhound?”

“That is the point,” declared Taplin. “The young ladies will not deny that a greyhound, by name Fido—”

“Never mind the name,” said the commissioner.

“But he is dead,” murmured Sarah. “I had him only—only—”

“O, you grant you had one: then you must pay.”

Swallow muttered that if his daughter had had the impertinence to deny, or equivocate, or battle the matter with the surveyor, she might have got off. He now vented his displeasure upon the girls, desiring them to accept of no more dogs; unless somebody else could be found to pay the duty: for he could not and would not.

Yet it was owing to Sarah that he escaped a far heavier and more expensive vexation. Horse-dealers are bound to deliver in accounts of the exercise of their trade (as they do not take out licenses) once a quarter, to the assessor. Partly from his having delivered the book into George's keeping, and having a short memory for what was not before his eyes, and partly from the hurry and bustle consequent on George's

commitment, and his own narrow escape, Swallow had forgotten all about this quarterly report. It was Sarah who remembered it, just in time, and saved the fine. Swallow took occasion, in the midst of his wrath, to ask the surveyor if he was not grievously disappointed that this fine of 50*l.* remained safe in the horse-dealer's pocket. The surveyor declared it was no concern of his.

Mrs. Barton! the loyal Mrs. Barton! what could she be here for? She might have been expected to pay the last half of her last cup of tea in tax, if the king had been graciously pleased to call for it. What could bring her here?

A very aggravated distress about windows. She and Miss Biggs could use no more than one window each to look out of; and when the maid had appropriated a third, far more remained than were necessary for the ventilation of Mrs. Barton's small house. Four windows had for years been shut up. The surveyor had now taken it into his head to charge for these windows. He pretended to suppose that these windows might be opened the day after he had turned his back. Such a dreadful supposition! that Mrs. Barton would cheat the king! She,—the most devoted to Church and King—

“Please to tell us, ma'am, how these windows are closed up.”

“Sir, the shutters are put to, and painted black, sir; and then there is lath and plaster erected within; so that not the minutest particle of light—not the most piercing eye—O, who could suspect me? But I cannot, you see, gentlemen, when the commerce of the place has so fallen off, and such a revolution and transition is going on; and when four windows are in question—”

Taplin only knew that he had received information that Mrs. Barton's dead windows could let in any convenient portion of light upon occasion. As for her business falling off, everybody knew that she had fresh customers for hair-powder—”

“What is that to us, Taplin?” said the surveyor. “Do keep to business. It is the least you can do, after bringing all these people about us to-day.”

“They brought me; not I them, gentlemen. If they had chosen to pay at once, there would have been none of this trouble. But her selling more hair-powder has to do with business. She cannot deny that she has starch in her house.”

“I!—Bless me! Starch in my house!” cried Mrs. Barton, looking from side to side, as if not knowing whether to admit or deny that she had starch in her house.

“Remember your oath. You have sworn to speak the truth, remember,” said Taplin, terrifically. “Your having starch gives me a strong impression that I shall find alabaster there, one of these days.”

“We have nothing to do with strong impressions,” declared the commissioners. “If you have nothing more to say about these windows, Taplin,—if you cannot overthrow Mrs. Barton's evidence of their being completely shut up, we must decide in her favour.”

“What is all this about starch, and alabaster, and strong impressions?” asked Fanny of her brother.

“Those who sell hair-powder (which is made of alabaster and starch) are prohibited from keeping alabaster in their houses. Taplin chooses to suppose Mrs. Barton has alabaster, because he is told she has starch. But that is an excise inquiry, and has nothing to do with the assessed taxes, as he knows. He only wants to frighten her, and make her give up about the windows.”

“They assess Maynard’s white head, however.”

“Yes, I have had to pay *1l. 3s. 6d.* for your serving man’s white head.”

“Must I make him leave off powder?”

“Not unless you wish to send him to his grave. No, government shall have the advantage of Maynard’s taste in dress as long as the old fellow lives with us. How Mrs. Barton’s head shakes! How triumphant she looks! I am afraid she will grow disloyal, after all. The commissioners are offering her a direct premium on resistance to—”

“Ah! to what? To Taplin, not to taxation. I am sure it must be a very bad thing for a government to have such servants as Taplin,—so prying,—so grasping!”

“There will be such till people grow as honest about paying their taxes as their other liabilities.”

“Stay, ma’am, we have not done with you yet,” said Taplin to Mrs. Barton. “There is a gentleman below, that I find travels for your house,—a commercial traveller, ma’am; *1l. 10s.* is the tax, ma’am, which I hope he brings you orders enough to enable you to pay. I shall by no means give up the claim for the windows, but refer it to the six judges: but I conceive you will hardly contest the traveller.”

“If you mean Mr. Taylor, who brought me a message from cousin Becky that she wanted some eau de Cologne, I am happy to tell you that gentleman never rode a mile out of his way for me.” And Mrs. Barton related that Mr. Taylor and her cousin were engaged, and that Mr. Taylor, being a commercial traveller, called on Mrs. Barton as he passed through A—, to give her news of Becky; but she offered to swear that he never took an order for her, or paid her any money, in his life. Some wag had imposed upon Taplin. Everybody laughed. Mrs. Barton had better have stopped here. Emboldened by the success of her eloquence, she went on to complain of the distresses of the times to commercial people, and of the favour shown to the agricultural class over that to which she belonged. She was afraid his Majesty forgot that kings formerly lived upon the land, and at the expense of those who held it. It was quite an innovation, their now living upon their trading subjects. Farmers had no house-tax to pay. There were actually near 137,000 farm-houses in England and Wales exempt from the house-tax. Farmers’ horses were to pay no tax, forsooth; and her friend Mr. Whitford had insured his farm-stock, and been charged nothing for the stamp. If a rich man’s wealth did but happen to be land, he was not charged the

inventory and legacy duties; and so it was in these degenerate days, that traders, the most useful set of subjects the king could have—

“You say so because you are a trader, and not a farmer, Mrs. Barton,” observed her friend, Mr. Whitford. “If you had to pay such burdens as I have, or even such a charge as I am here about now—”

“Come, let us hear it, Mr. Whitford,” said the Commissioners.

“Of all unconscionable things, the surveyor wants to charge me for my market-cart.”

“Because you use it to ride in, I suppose?”

“The horse cannot go to market without somebody to drive him; but we have a gig for our pleasure; and that I pay for.”

“Your gig for pleasure, and your cart for convenience, I suppose. Does nobody ever ride in your cart for convenience?”

Whitford could not deny that if his wife and he wanted to go into A—, or to the village of M—, they took the opportunity of a lift when the good wife and her boy were going with mutton, eggs, and butter; but the cart was a market-cart, and he already paid for a gig. It came out, however, that the cart was painted so as to look very pretty; and there was a seat which could be strapped on, to make the vehicle convenient for more persons than could be wanted to drive it to market.—The assessment was confirmed.

Whitford hoped Mrs. Barton perceived that agriculture was not too much considered. She saw the treatment he met with to-day; and if she was aware how Taplin was on the watch whenever the farm-horses went to drink, to find out that they were used for some purpose which might justify a charge,—if she knew how nearly he prevailed with the Commissioners last time to tax Whitford for his shepherd’s dog, she would to think trade particularly aggrieved.

Taplin declared that Whitford’s horses went to drink oftener than any horses at the Navarino or the Turk’s Head thought of drinking. It had become quite a joke, Whitford’s horses going to drink; and the dog was certainly seen feeding off one of Whitford’s sheep.

Because the sheep happened to die, Whitford declared. In that case, the Commissioners had done justice to agriculture.

“These people are a specimen of how people talk, the wide world over,” observed Richard to his sister. “You see how they argue upon the vast interests of vast bodies from the temporary aspect of their own little affairs. Agriculture is protected or oppressed, according as Whitford has to pay thirty shillings more or less; and Mrs. Barton’s windows are to be the test how trade is regarded by King, Lords, and Commons.”

“I wonder how King, Lords, and Commons are ever to know what to depend upon, if all interests are urged in this partial way,” observed Fanny.

“There are always principles to be depended upon in this matter of taxation, as in everything else; and there can be no other safe guides. Amidst the inconsistent, the bewildering representations offered, a certain number must be in accordance with true principles; and it is these which must be professedly acted upon.”

“But if foolish representations abound, and wise ones are scarce, what must Government do then?”

“The last thing it ought to do is to ground its proceedings on the ignorance of the people,—to yield them that which they will hereafter despise the donors for granting them.”

“The house-tax, for instance, which some people in London are clamouring to be rid of.”

“The house-tax, indeed, is an instance. The house-tax is one of the best taxes that ever was imposed. It is one of the very few which falls only on the wealthy and substantial—on none below the owners of houses. It is a direct tax, and might be made an equal one; and is particularly convenient as to the time and mode of payment, to all who are not such babies as to prefer having their money taken from them without their knowing it. This tax is unpopular with a portion of a particular class; and an immense proportion of the nation knows nothing, and has nothing to say, about it. This gives a favourable opportunity to the highest classes, who have not paid their due share, to get rid together of the question and the odium of not paying their share; and thus the Government is tempted to silence clamour and please the aristocracy, on the plea of yielding to the popular wish. But if the Government yields to this temptation,—if it takes off the best-principled tax we have, and leaves the worst,—I hope it is preparing itself for that retribution which, sooner or later, overtakes every government which founds its measures on popular ignorance.”

“But what can be done? Is not its unpopularity a sufficient reason for the abolition of a tax, when some tax is to be abolished?”

“Its general unpopularity. But, in this instance, the opposition, though harassing, is partial, and only such as might easily be diverted, by equalizing the pressure of the tax. If it were now to be thus equalized, and if any pains whatever were taken to exhibit to the people the comparative qualities of this duty, and of any one of our worst excise taxes, the very shopkeepers of London would soon worship the footsteps of the Chancellor of the Exchequer for preferring to their dictation the unurged interests of the many.”

“The taxes that have been in question to-day have none of them fallen on the poor.”

“None of the direct taxes do; yet they are so few, that the poorer classes pay five times as much as the classes above them. Now, mark our consistency. We admit (because nobody can deny) that an equitable taxation leaves all parties in the same relative

position in which it found them. We know (or might know) that the poorer classes are made, by indirect taxation, to pay five times as much as others; and yet, as soon as there is a tax to take off, we leave the excise untouched, and relieve the upper classes of the very heaviest which bears particularly on them, and the very fairest which our long list can exhibit. This injustice could not be perpetrated if the poor had their rights, either of enlightenment or of parliamentary representation.”

“I do wonder that these assessed taxes are so unpopular, even among those who pay them; for, however disagreeable it may be to have the tax-gatherer come and take a certain sum, which the owner would like to keep for some other purpose, the tax-payer is, at least, master of his own house and his own business. The brewer, and the paper-maker, and the glass-manufacturer have much more reason to complain, liable as they are to be watched and persecuted by excisemen, and insulted by anybody who chooses to inform.”

“These direct taxes are difficult to evade; and this, which is a real virtue in a tax, makes it disliked by those who entertain ‘an ignorant impatience of taxation.’ But it ought to be known that the most ingenious person that ever evaded the payment of his share of tax would part with less of his money by manly payment, under a system of direct taxation, than by paying no more than he could possibly help under an excise and customs’ system. Mr. Pitt lowered the duty on tea in 1784; and, to make up for the deficiency to Government, laid on an additional window-tax. What happened? The same classes who had to pay an additional window-duty found that they had more money than before to spend on tea. The consumption of tea increased so marvellously, that the amount of revenue it brought in was not much less than before; and Government was, on the whole, a great gainer, and the people not losers. Less was lost between the people’s pockets and the Treasury. If we could but take a lesson from this event, and go on diminishing our indirect and increasing our direct taxation, both Government and people might be astonished at the apparent creation of wealth to them both. It is grievous to think of 2,000,000*l.* being levied on our own manufactures, and 6,000,000*l.* on the raw materials in the country, while only five millions and a quarter are raised by direct taxation, while the cost of collection of the one is three times that of the other. If, out of this five millions and a quarter, the house-tax is yet to be taken, we must bear to be taunted with ‘the wisdom of our ancestors,’ and be sure that our posterity will not have much to say in praise of ours.”

“And yet people talk of absentees being brought home by the doing away of direct taxes.”

“The absentees will hardly talk of coming home for any such reason. They see that there is now a smaller proportion of direct taxation in this country than in any other in Europe; and they know that out of our government revenue of between forty and fifty millions, scarcely one million and a half is raised on expenditure peculiar to the rich, and that they did not go abroad to escape this very slight burden. If they did not go abroad to escape it, they will not be brought back by a small reduction of their small share.”

“And if they could be brought back, their return is not for a moment to be set against any advantage given to the lower and more heavily-burdened classes.—But see! there are some poor people standing before the Commissioners; some really poor people, Richard.”

“Who can yet afford some luxury which Mr. Taplin has got scent of, perhaps.”

“Do you know, I think some informer has been busy among us. Mr. Taplin can never have had the wit to find out so suddenly all these liabilities.”

“There are informers for profit, and informers for fun, Fanny. I have seen somebody enjoying the joke as the tax-payers came up to appeal; and the more cross they look, the more he enjoys the fun. He is a good deal annoyed, I fancy, at our sitting here so quietly, waiting to let my case be the last.”

“Wallace! Do you think he would connect himself with Mr. Taplin?”

“Anonymous letters would serve the purpose. But I will not forgive him for wasting the time of these poor people, if they are not liable; and I cannot think they can be liable.”

The group consisted of a poor woman and her two sons, the elder of whom resembled her in his evident dread of being sworn, while the younger seemed likely to fail in nothing for want of courage. The mother might safely swear, however, that the mule for which she was to be taxed, if Mr. Taplin was to have his way, was given by Mr. Whitford to her elder lad, and that it was too young to be used yet; and when it should be strong enough, it would not pay its own tax of half a guinea. If she might be let off now, she would get rid of the beast before night, if the gentlemen pleased. Any of them should be welcome to the mule, which was of no use to her, but only cropped its living along the lanes. Mr. Taplin was made duly ashamed of this charge.

Perhaps the being upon oath tied the tongue of the elder lad; for he would not say that he had not carried a gun any day this last season; that he had not, in any manner, knocked down a hare or a rabbit; that he had not been seen coursing when Mr. Cranston’s harriers were in the field. He declared that he was there merely as a spectator; that he had no dogs; and that he was returning on horseback from an errand on which he had been sent by his master, and had merely joined the sport because the horse he rode wished to do so. These excuses were not admitted: he was requested to pay *3l. 13s. 6d.*; on hearing which request, he turned as white as ashes, and looked apprehensively at his mother. It was clear that they could not raise the money.

“For God’s sake, Richard, tell me how I may get this poor fellow off,” said Wallace, coming up to his brother, in much perturbation.

“Suppose you pay the fine. It is hardly fair that the Government should not have something out of your pocket to-day, when you have managed to extract more or less from almost every body else. I do wonder you could bring yourself to waste the valuable time of these poor people; and pray observe how their consciences are racked about the oath. I fancy a little bold swearing would have brought off that good

lad. Stop, Wallace!” as Wallace was darting towards his victim. Wallace returned. “I am pretty sure the Commissioners are wrong here. You can offer to refer the case to the six judges, if you think proper: I feel sure they will give it against the Commissioners.”

“You must make the offer, Richard; I will take all the trouble, I faithfully promise you. But you would not have me be thanked by these people, when they do not know that I brought them into this scrape: you must speak up for them.”

Richard did so; and Wallace whispered to them that, happen what might, they would have nothing to pay. The younger lad swore to all and everything that was convenient, in order to escape what his brother had been threatened with. He had not carried a gun. Well, if he had, it was only to shoot crows. O yes; he had shot at something besides crows,—he had brought down a paper kite that had stuck in a tree. That which he brought home in his bag was a weasel, which his master thanked him for destroying. Thus did he get rid of every question; and he evidently took credit to himself for his superiority over his brother in cleverness. Fanny thought it all very bad, and was glad to be convinced that the fault lay, not in the principle of the taxes in question, but in the methods of managing their collection. Even now, all this was far less disagreeable and pernicious than the management of the excise and customs’ duties; and the remedy would certainly arrive whenever the race of tax-gatherers should improve, which will be whenever the people shall learn their duty in respect of paying taxes. When all shall be done openly, and persons shall subscribe to government as they subscribe to any other institution, as a condition of sharing the privileges, there will be an end of secret informations and of perjury. Till then, as it is clear that there is far less of these grievances and crimes under a system of direct than indirect taxation, let those who dislike underhand enmity and false swearing advocate the utmost possible simplification of the system,—the imposition of few and direct, in place of many and complicated, taxes.

It was a sad necessity for Mr. Pritchard of the Turk’s Head to have to appear in the house of his rival of the Navarino; but it was necessary, not only to show himself, but to lose his cause. The Expedition stage-coach had started from the Turk’s Head from the time when Pritchard was the smartest of young innkeepers till now, when he was losing his energy and going out of fashion; and, during many a year, had he, the proprietor, paid the tax upon the two coaches which daily passed each other on the road. It had now suddenly occurred to Mr. Taplin that there must be a third coach always ready for use, in case of any accident happening to the other two. No protestations of the impossibility of more than two being wanted were of any use. The existence of the third could not be denied, nor its having been seen on the road within a month. Pritchard was compelled to pay for three.

And now was Richard’s turn. He happened to have a seal with a horse’s head and his initials upon it. Taplin charged him for armorial bearings. Richard paid for these on his carriages, and he thought this enough. He stoutly argued his point about crests and coats of arms; and even went so far as to talk of appealing to the six judges if the commissioners decided against him. It was in vain. He threw down his 2*l.* 8*s.* at last, to save further trouble to himself and other people, and sighed over the seal, with the

use of which he should indulge himself no more while in Mr. Taplin's neighbourhood. He had nothing to say against the tax. There could hardly be a better, particularly as it was improving in productiveness; but he could not submit to use a seal in so expensive a way.

"It rather gives one pleasure to see you suffer," observed Fanny, "when one considers a surcharge on ourselves as a kind of reparation to the poor for their bearing, as a class, so much more than we do. It is a comfort to think that Mr. Taplin has not laid a finger on one poor person to-day, except—"

"Except the poor fellow whose suffering, if inflicted, would have been ultimately owing to our game-laws. Those game-duties are fair enough while our gentry go on preserving their game, and bringing upon their heads the blood and moral destruction of the hundreds and thousands that are lost for their indulgence."

Fanny observed that she had never thought so much about the old French nobility as since the gaol at A— had been tenanted by offenders against Richard's game.

"I cannot bear it," said Richard. "I must go through with the affair, now it is begun, I suppose, for the sake of the country gentlemen in the neighbourhood: but it is the last time poor men shall first be tempted by me into what they do not consider crime, and then punished in a way which makes them criminal. I feel already as if I must be answerable for all the real crime and all the misery which must result from these men being separated from their families and their employments, and thrown into the corruption of a prison. I cannot bear it."

"What will you do?"

"Leave off preserving my game; give it up as property; do anything rather than foster night meetings of poachers, and cause an annual transformation of some of them into burglars, or lawless wretches of some proscribed class or another. Ah! I know James and Wallace will be very angry. But let them go and sport elsewhere, if they must sport. They shall not have my countenance in spoiling my neighbourhood. When they have to go a long way to find a bird, and have tried in vain to start a hare, they may invite themselves somewhere else, and leave me with my rooks, which I like better than my pheasants, after all."

"But is it not rather a pity?" Fanny had some regrets.

"Certainly it will require some self-denial, even in me, who am careless about sport: but are we rich people so very sorely exercised in self-denial that, living in a country where food is the one scarce thing, we must forbid the half-starved labourer to touch the tempting flesh and fowl that spring from beneath his feet, as he walks where no eyes see him?—flesh and fowl which he regards as common property, because they are by nature wild? Be the labourer right or wrong in his notion, as long as his want and his notion co-exist, I will surrender to the weakness of his condition what I am not at all sure that I should deny to the strength of his arguments. No man shall in my time go to gaol for offences against the Fellbrow game. Maynard may teach Mrs.

Barton to set springes if he pleases; and Swallow may carry away his dozen hares in broad day, instead of at night. If George comes out no worse a boy than he went in, his pretty sisters shall hold him at his post in the office for me. We must think of some way of keeping Morse's heart from breaking. That is the thing most to be dreaded. He cares more for the pheasants than for poor Alick, I believe."

"Those game-duties must be given up, if every gentleman followed your example. But, to be sure, there are more important things involved in the question than the game-duties."

"Taxes on luxury are excellent things, when that part which is paid in money is all. But when reputation, innocence, the comfort of some entire families, and the actual subsistence of others, are the tax paid for one factitious luxury enjoyed by those who revel in luxuries, the cost is too great. James says that one of our neighbours will be transported; that he has evidence of something worse than the mere poaching. For my part, I conclude that most of those concerned will be either transported or hanged, sooner or later. Such is the common issue of poaching."

"One would think some man-hater had ingeniously planned this method by which to slide from mere carelessness or frolic into crime. Here is just the intermediate step between honesty and dishonesty, without which many an one would never have transgressed. Here is a property which is so peculiar as not to be considered a property by those who are tempted to take it. Punish them as for taking property, and they become wilful thieves, and all is over. But who is the one neighbour James means?"

"You will be surprised to learn; but it is a secret at present. Now, shall we walk?"

"As soon as Mrs. Barton is gone from before the door. I think she will never have done talking to Maynard."

"Not till you go down. She is waiting to speak to you, and you may as well take it graciously."

"O, but I bought some lavender water of her only yesterday."

"Never mind! I dare say she has something new to say to you to-day about Church and King."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VII.

LOUNGING AND LISTENING.

“I never said anything so decidedly to you before, James, but you must stay,” said Richard to his brother, the clergyman, who was lounging from window to window of the library.

“Such a place to keep one shut up in, in the midst of winter!” muttered James. “It is enough to make one melancholy to look at that black frozen water under the rocks, and all the trees within sight loaded with snow, and not a twig stirring to shake off so much as a flake. ’Tis so desolate when one compares it with London, I declare my spirits won’t stand it.”

“One week cannot make much difference. It was all your doing that any stir was made about these poachers at all, and you must stay a few days longer to carry the matter through. What difference can one week make?”

“All the difference in the world. The journey up to town with the Lees signifies more than any thing I shall meet with when I get there. The happiness of my whole life may depend on those three days of travelling—”

“How little you know of yourself, James,” said his sister, “if you think that anything that can happen in three days can make you happy!”

“You can make me preciously unhappy, I know, if you keep me three days longer in this miserable place. Why, ’tis a place only fit for a hermit to live in, in winter.”

And he glanced at a green stain which was still conspicuous on the ceiling. It was convenient to overlook the thick new carpet, the roaring fire, and the ample provision of books, whose arrangement had been just completed under his own eye. “It is very strange if you cannot transport a man without my help. I am sure I wish Taplin had gone on thumbing his Ready Reckoner for many a night to come before I had meddled with him. It will end in my being full as much punished as he, or any of his gang.”

“Thumbing his what?” asked Fanny of Richard.

“The Ready Reckoner. Taplin has been the head of the poaching gang. It has been organized by him,—made into a kind of club, sworn to co-operate. Taplin administered the oath; and his excuse is, that the men were sworn, not on a Testament, but on the Ready Reckoner. We have evidence enough to transport Taplin. It was James that obtained it; (you had better ask him how;) and now he wants to be off to London, at the critical moment, (you had better ask him why,) and leave me to manage the matter in which I have never stirred, except in as far as I was forced by him.”

“I know the how and the why,” observed Fanny, gravely. “The greatest wonder of all is to hear him talk of the happiness of his future life, with such a how and why lying on his conscience.”

“Now, you just show, at this moment, the folly of meddling in other people’s affairs, and preaching about other people’s consciences,” said James, turning round from the window. “I can tell you that Sarah Swallow is going to be married. I know it for fact; for her intended told me of it himself. Indeed, he asked me to marry them. What do you think of this, Fanny?”

“I think just as I did before. If Sarah proved herself as light-minded and fickle as yourself,—if she so injured and betrayed the interests of her sex,—how does that excuse your treachery to—”

“Now, if you say another word about the sanctity of the church, and the dignity of the clerical character, and all that, I will never set foot in my living again to the end of my days.”

“I was not going to make any appeal to you which I know to be so useless. The clerical character has no dignity in your keeping; and you take care that the church shall have no sanctity in the eyes of your people.”

“That is not my fault.”

“I know it. You can no more be a clergyman than you can be a musician or a sculptor. Your misfortune and that of your people is that you are called a clergyman.”

“Ah! I saw two old women dreadfully scandalized, the last time I came from the hunt. They thought I was over the ears in a pitcher of ale; but I heard them say, ‘There’s our parson, with not a thread of black on him but his neckcloth.’ ”

“The sin of the case lies with the church that makes a point of a black coat while she tempts in—”

“Black hearts?”

“Hearts that must needs come out black from being steeped in the hypocrisy of a professed sanctity.”

“I am sure I never professed any sanctity.”

“Therefore your heart is not of the deepest black of all. But what has been your only alternative? Leading your people to think that no sanctity exists.”

“That is the fault of the system,—not mine. The system made it a matter of course that I should be a clergyman. Here I am. I must either set my face at its full length, and play a damned deep part when I talk of righteousness, and temperance, and—and all that—”

“And judgment to come,” said Richard, gravely.

“Or, if the people see I am thinking of anything but what I am saying, they can hardly believe that such threats signify much. You should lay the blame on those that put me into the church.”

“They would plead that you were put there as a matter of course;—that you were born to it. They would refer the blame farther back; where, indeed, it ought to rest. The day must come when faithless parents must be arraigned by their injured children: and then will your people, among a countless multitude besides, rise up in judgment against mother-church for having made an elaborate provision for, not only desecrating the gospel, but generating infidelity towards both God and man.”

“That may be all very true; but I cannot help my share of it now.”

“You can stop the spread of the mischief which has sprung up through you. Come out of the church. You look more astonished than there is any occasion for. Remember—”

“Remember, sister, how it is with other professions. A bad physician does not give up practice; nor does an ignorant lawyer, because of incapacity.”

“Remember that the physician and lawyer who are as well known to be as unfit for their business as you are for yours, are not employed. In the profession of the church alone are the incapable sure of their occupation and its recompense. But no one is more aware than you that the days are coming when, if the unqualified do not step out of the church, they will be plucked out; or, if time be promised them to die out, it will be a chance whether the impatience of the long-betrayed people will not unroof the sanctuary from over their heads. You well know this, James. Your duty to your church, then, requires that you vacate your place: that at least one—”

“Knave? Hypocrite? Come. Out with it!”

“At least one unqualified person may give place to a true-hearted one who may help to restore what has been laid waste. If you owe no duty to your church, you do to your people; and both the one and the other require you to vacate.”

“And Mary Lee forbids. If you had said all this a month ago —”

“Then Sarah Swallow would have forbidden. Your people must be betrayed in order to enable you to marry, while, at the same time, you cannot make up your mind whom to marry. You will persuade yourself, when you have been married a month, that you have made the wrong choice, after all. If you would give up your living, and work with your conscience in some other employment, instead of sporting with it in this, you might find at last that you had a heart, and that there was some one person who alone could satisfy it. You might be happy, James, after all.”

“There is no use in that sort of thing now,” urged James. “Sarah is disposed of, and Mary Lee—”

“Disposed of!” said Fanny, fixing her eyes upon him so that his were immediately turned away.

“Upon my honour, I had nothing to do with it. It was all their own doing. It was as much news to me as to anybody when Morse came to ask me to marry him.”

“I believe you. I acquit you of providing for the prostitution of one whose innocent heart you had just gained, and found it convenient to throw away.”

“But the winning and casting off led to the rest,” observed Richard.

“I tell you, she threw herself away. The old man sought her because his son loved her,—not because I did. But he is a good old fellow; and after all—”

“Silence!” cried Fanny. “Go on, if you dare, to say that to be the slave of an ignorant old man,—the household drudge of a being she despises for marrying her almost as much as she despises herself for marrying him,—say, if you dare, that this is a good enough lot for one whom you yourself taught to feel that she had a mind and a heart, to be free in action, and devoted in affection—”

Her eyes rained tears, and her voice trembled so that she could not go on to say that with which her heart was overfull. James began to ask himself whether he had not committed a great mistake in deserting one for whom Fanny seemed to feel so passionate an affection. In the midst of her agitation, Fanny saw his misapprehension.

“It is for my sex,—it is for our nature, that I feel it so much,” she struggled to say. “That no more should be understood of what love is by those who are acting in the very name of love! That any one should dare to open only to darken,—to expand only to crush! Anne says, ‘I did say a great deal, but Sarah is so much cleverer now than I am, that I dare not say all that was in my mind. She sees how foolish many things are that we never used to doubt of, and that I do not understand any better now.’ Nothing can be truer. The whole being of the one sister has been awakened, in order to be tortured; and the other can no longer console.”

To carry off some emotion which could not be helped, James began to jest. He thought it was only fair,—for the purpose of restoring the sympathy between the sisters,—that he should flirt a little with Anne.

“Try;” Fanny said; and she spoke no more.

James next made an attempt upon Richard.

“I am sure you ought to thank me, Richard. You wanted to have Morse’s heart kept from breaking, if you should give up preserving your game. The thing is done, you see, thanks to me.”

Richard took no notice.

“I never saw such a brother and sister in my life,” cried James, with a heavy tread up and down the room. “I believe you do not care for anything that happens to me.”

“We do,” said Richard; “but we are bound to care for others too.”

“And for your future self,” added Fanny. “James, do promise that you will not seek Mary Lee. I do not know why you should look amazed. You must know that she would not think of you, if she knew all; and that you cannot make her life happy, if you could persuade her that you love her now. Do not crush another heart.”

James was, of course, quite sure that he loved Miss Lee, and pretty confident that he could attach her, and absolutely certain that they should make one another perfectly happy. He should go now, and learn whether her departure could by no stratagem be deferred till he could accompany her; if not, he should fly after her the very hour that sentence should be pronounced on Taplin.

He returned in two hours, very much out of humour. The Lees were going the next morning. He should hasten to Brighton, or somewhere, till the spring; any where (after Fellbrow) except London. He hated London at this time of year almost as much as in the autumn. He should speak to Riley about getting so much of the new house ready as should fit it for the residence of a curate. It might as well go on so far, now it was begun; but he could not think what had possessed him to begin building in such a place.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VIII.

CHARACTERISTICS.

Sarah seemed quite disposed to allow Morse's plea that a long courtship was not so suitable to his years as it might have been to those of his poor boy. She left him the choice of the day, and called on her sister to assist her in speeding the necessary preparations. Anne humbly obeyed all directions. She might wonder,—she was indeed lost in wonder, at all she heard and saw; but Anne was by this time persuaded that she was very stupid in comparison with Sarah, and that she had been very wicked in envying Sarah a happiness which Sarah had parted with so much more easily,—with so much a better grace than Anne herself could have done. She was angry with herself, too, for not respecting and liking good Mr. Morse as she had done. The more love-letters Sarah threw into her lap to be read, the more presents Mr. Morse brought for Sarah, and the more carefully he spread them out to be admired, the less did she like him; and she could not sit quiet, like Sarah, under his jokes and pretty speeches, while she remembered things that Mr. Cranston had said. She wished Sarah would not laugh when people said it would be Anne's turn next, and when they talked about the new tax-collector,—of his honesty and civility, and his wish to be comfortably settled;—as if that was any business of hers. She had seen enough of love and marriage. She was not very fond of the bustle there always was about the Paddock, and she should find living there very forlorn when Sarah would be half a mile off; but she would be content with her lot; and she now knew how to deal with any Mr. Cranstons that might come in her way.

When the wedding-party had encountered a good many acquaintances who had accidentally happened to take their walk, on the bridal morning, past the gamekeeper's cottage and towards the church—when they had slipped past Mrs. Barton at the moment when she was relieving Maynard from the charge of the spaniel, and had received Mr. Pritchard's smiling bow, and heard his promise to drink their healths after dinner, they fell in, at a cross path, with James himself, who was riding to the church in company with his curate, to whom he introduced the bridal party.

“I should have said,” observed James, walking his horse by Anne's side, “that—You remember that you were the first I became acquainted with,—when your sister rode down the lane, and left you with me;—you remember?”

“Yes, sir, I remember.”

“Well, I should have said then that you were likely to be the first to be seen at the altar. I am sure it must be your own fault that you are not. I cannot think what you are to do without your sister.”

Anne was vexed that tears would spring.

“Ah! It will be sadly lonely. I am quite sorry for you. You shall have a dog to keep you company. No better company than a dog, when one is melancholy! You shall have a spaniel as pretty as my sister’s; and I dare say you will take better care of it than your sister did of hers. I will bring it myself in a day or two.

Anne said she should be busier than ever after her sister’s departure, and should have no time for dogs or visitors. She showed no regret when he talked of going away; no pleasure at his doubt whether he might not be induced to stay. She looked up, as for an explanation, when he sighed about misunderstanding and precipitation, and the blindness of some people to their own attractions. How Anne wished, at that moment, that Sarah had ever happened to look full in the face of her late admirer, and seen how he could be confused by such silent questioning!

James put as little sanctity into the service as could be desired by the strongest foe to hypocrisy, or lamented by his astonished curate. Why Morse should be so proud as he was of being married by anybody who could marry him in such a manner as this, was more than a stranger could comprehend. In the midst, the cry of hounds was heard. The clergyman stopped a moment, and went on uneasily. Another cry followed, and he halted again. Morse made bold to step forward and whisper.

“If there had been no other clergyman here, I don’t know that I should have offered such a thing as to put our affair off till to-morrow; but perhaps that gentleman—I think it is a pity, sir, you should lose the hunt, sir, on our account; that’s all. But you are the best judge, sir.”

In another minute, James had leaped upon his horse at the church-door, and his curate had taken his place at the altar,—so discomposed as to find it difficult to proceed as if nothing had happened. When all was done, Sarah was still pale with the sense of insult, while her husband was congratulating himself on his own good-breeding in not standing in the way of his young master’s pleasure.

This was the last marriage service attempted by James, except in the instances of gay friends, who liked to be helped through the ceremony by one resembling themselves. He was better known, as a clergyman, in the newspapers than in any other way. Mrs. Barton now and then read a paragraph to Miss Biggs which showed that “our young clergyman” was still in existence, and still a clergyman; and Mr. Pritchard’s guests were on such occasions enlightened as to James’s connexions, and the family estate, and the tenure of the living in the vicinity. But thus alone was James heard and spoken of among the neighbours of those who would have been happy to forget that they had ever seen him. He never gave his curate any trouble about the living, or cared about Fellbrow when better sporting was to be had elsewhere.

the end.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

TAXATION.

No. II.

THE

TENTH HAYCOCK.

A Tale.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

LONDON:

CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

THE TENTH HAYCOCK.

Chapter I.

PERAMBULATION.

Widow Lambert liked to be told, a very few years ago, that the Abbey Farm was as great an ornament to her native district as the abbey itself could ever have been in the days of its splendour. She recalled the tales with which she had been struck in her childhood, before her sober father forbade her climbing old apple-trees, and her strict mother ordained the adoption of the quaker cap, and the handkerchief she had worn ever since;—tales of the former grandeur of this religious house, with its eighty monks and its hundred and ten servants: and it gratified her maternal pride to be assured that her two comely sons and their labourers kept the estate in as flourishing a condition as their predecessors,—the ecclesiastics and their lay brethren who were subordinate to them.

This abbey was believed to have held a distinguished rank among the religious houses which existed before there was any division of land into parishes, or when a parish meant the same as a diocese does now: when every man paid his ecclesiastical dues to any church he thought fit, provided he paid them to some; and when these dues were delivered into the hands of the bishop, to be divided among the four objects to which they must be appropriated,—the ease of the bishop, the aid of the church, the relief of the poor, and the support of the administering clergyman. Nor was it afterwards in less repute, when the dignitaries of the church were otherwise amply provided for, and the tithes were appropriated to three objects instead of four. The monks were of opinion that a very small sum was sufficient for the maintenance of the officiating priest; and they were active in gathering in their dues on the plea of the wants of the poor, while their train of servants was lengthened, the beauty of their abbey improved, and their fields and gardens were made to abound in the means of luxurious living. By a liberal expenditure of their peculiar purchase-money, masses and obits, and sometimes by a sacrifice of solid gold, they obtained all the advowsons within their reach, and became patrons of a great many benefices. It was made worth while to royalty to grant its license for such appropriation; and the consent of the bishop was regularly granted in return for the promise that the service of the church should be duly cared for. The brethren, therefore, were enriched from year to year with tithe and glebe; while, instead of presenting any clerk, they themselves contributed as much as they chose to the spiritual aid of the flocks they had thus gathered into their own ample fold. This process of appropriation went on very smoothly, (to the brethren, however it might be to the people under their charge) till this spiritual corporation was dissolved by Henry VIII; his bluff majesty constituting himself parson in their stead. There was little wonder that he busied himself about the Faith when he became at once parson of more than one-third of the parishes of England. However zealous he might be in his office, it was too burdensome for any man. The work of appointing vicars to so many benefices was more than the king could undertake. He sold the

appropriations,—not always to holy men, (for he had himself deprived the holy of the power of bidding high for the property he had to sell,) but to laymen who transmitted them to their children, or disposed of them to other laymen, without any scruple as to thus alienating the pious contributions of believers to the church. This alienation was made the more extensive by a statute of the same monarch which ordained that the church lands purchased by laymen should remain exempt from tithes, as if they still belonged to the ecclesiastics. In this respect alone did the Abbey Farm of Mrs. Lambert's time resemble the abbey domain of the day of Henry VIII. Instead of the cowed company whose members issued in state from the splendid building, to mount their sleek steeds to go forth and counsel the punctual payment of their dues, there was now Sir William Hood, the impropiator of the parish, marking with quick eye, from the rectory window, the luxuriance of the abbey fields, and calculating the loss to himself from their being tithe-free. Instead of the shaven priest who went down when required to perform some spiritual service, there was the gowned student muttering Hebrew in the little vicarage garden, or allowing himself to be talked to by his daughter Alice, when she tempted him abroad among his people. Instead of travellers of high and low degree craving hospitality at the portal of the monastery, there was the staid widow Lambert moving quietly between the poultry yard and the dairy, while her sons were training their fruit-trees against the grey unroofed walls which had once echoed back the prayers of the devout and the jests of the convivial. All these things were changed; but the neighbouring soil still yielded its produce, as formerly, unquestioned as to the amount of its tenths.

Very unlike indeed was any thing that passed in these grounds in monkish times to the preparation now made by the Lamberts for the reception of the minister, the churchwardens and the parishioners on occasion of their annual perambulation of the parish. The widow, more neat, if possible, than usual, in her plaited cap, silk mittens and muslin handkerchief, consulted with her son Charles as to the sufficiency of the beer and buns provided for the host of visitors they were expecting: while Joseph gave another brush to his broad brim before he went to station himself at the gate by which the crowd must enter. The intercourse between the vicar and this family was not very frequent, and of a somewhat strange character. He could not help admiring Mrs. Lambert's kindness of spirit as much as he marvelled at her thrift; while she, distinguished above all things for good sense, was no less astonished at the manner in which he passed his time, and the mode in which he brought up his little daughter. She was at the same time drawn towards him by the simplicity of his manners and the evidence which his whole demeanour bore to his piety. On Sundays, he woke out of a reverie on his way to the church, when Mrs. Lambert passed him and bowed her head with a cheerful "Good morning to thee;" and on week days, the young men, however busy, were always ready to listen to the vicar's suggestions in any affair which concerned the interests of their neighbours. Charles was his favourite of the two, when he had once learned to distinguish them; for Charles listened without distraction to what was said. Joseph wished to do the same; but he could not conquer his confusion when Alice looked likely to laugh at his calling her father Mark Hellyer. He was apt to twist his sentences, and be thinking how he should avoid Quaker peculiarities of speech, when Mr. Hellyer wanted his whole attention; and Charles was therefore pronounced by the vicar the more promising young man, and the most like his mother.

Joseph, however, was the first at his post this morning. When, standing at the gate, he heard the shouts from a distance, and could distinguish the tips of the white wands carried by the churchwardens, he took one more survey of his well-brushed suit, smoothed once more his sleek beaver, and was ready with a broad smile to welcome the crowd. The vicar was in the midst, smiling as broadly as any one, and as heartily amused as he had ever been by the choicest Greek epigram. The men and boys about him were equally diverted by the fulfilment of their prophecy that the vicar would not know the bounds of the parish any better this year than any preceding year. All possible pains had been taken, from his first entrance upon the vicarage, to instruct him in the localities which he had a direct interest in understanding; but he looked as much astonished as ever when informed that he must not go along this path, or through that gate, but must lead the way in traversing this fallow, and climbing the gap in that hedge. Mr. Peterson, a neighbour, who took a kind interest in his affairs, was now on one side of him, and Byrne, a labourer of the Lamberts, on the other; and all the little boys in the parish were at their heels, watching for his reverence's mistakes, and daring each other to offer him cowslips from every field they passed. While in full progress towards Joseph, Mr. Hellyer was carried off to the right, to make an unwilling circuit before he could reach his young friend; and while he was performing this task, Joseph learned something of the events of the morning;—how there was no difficulty to-day about their crossing the rectory garden, Sir William Hood not being there to murmur at the ground lying half in one parish and half in another, and his lessee not having arrived: how Miss Alice had earnestly wished to be one of the perambulating party, and had been pacified under the impossibility only by being permitted to view the ceremony from the cottage of her nurse,—Byrne's wife, who had married from the vicarage. The young lady had amused herself with the annual joke of throwing water upon the perambulators; and it was thought that her own father had not escaped a sprinkling. No such greeting had awaited the party as they passed Miss Fox's school, where not a window was opened, and nothing could be seen but the sudden apparition of a dozen curled heads above the blinds, and their equally sudden disappearance. The poor young ladies there were kept in better order than Miss Alice. Mr. Parker had been more surly than ever, this morning, about the churchwardens crossing his hop ground; though the boys had been sent round by the lane, and not half a dozen hop poles thrown down. The vicar's spirit had been roused, and it was thought he had made Mr. Parker ashamed of himself. He might take a lesson from old Mrs. Beverley. The gentlemen were very sorry that her house stood on the boundary, so that they had to pass through her little hall and out at her back gate; but the poor old lady made light of the disturbance, and desired her maid to let every body through that wished to pass, and always had her glass of gooseberry wine ready for the vicar and the churchwardens, even when (as was the case this year), she was too feeble to be brought down stairs to bid them welcome. She had said nothing about having lost one of her bantams last year. It would not have been known, but that the maid was observed to look very anxiously after the fowls this morning. The gentlemen were duly concerned, and had alarmed the maid with promises of such reparation as she feared would bring her mistress's anger upon her for having betrayed the circumstance. The narrator concluded with an opinion that Mr. Parker might also take a lesson from Charles and Joseph Lambert, who always threw open their gates cheerfully on these occasions.

“My mother hopes thou wilt rest at the farm,” said Joseph to the vicar, justifying the compliment which he had just received, “and any of thy friends will be welcome also. My brother is expecting the whole company at the farm.”

The whole company poured into the field, appearing fully disposed to accept the invitation.

“If thou hast no objection,” he presently added, “I will step to John Byrne’s for thy daughter, and bring her to our summer house on the hill. We conceive that the finding the boundary this year, among the new enclosures, will be amusing; and I could conduct thy daughter and Jane Byrne to the summer house, while our friends here are refreshing themselves at the farm. Have I thy permission?”

“Alice? Yes; it is a pity Alice should not be here. You are very good. I think it is a pity Alice should not be here.”

The obliging Joseph only waited to see his guest under his brother’s charge, and then set off for Byrne’s cottage. He knew how fond the little girl was of this summer house on the hill, when the dog was silenced and chained up, and she was at liberty either to gather the wallflowers which grew around as profusely as common grass, or to look abroad over the vast prospect which was spread out below the high hill from which this building projected. As two fields and an extent of down had to be traversed before the hill could be climbed, no time was to be lost; and Joseph made all speed: and though Alice overheated herself with running, and left Mrs. Byrne to clamber up the ascent as she best could, she was only just in time to see the crowd leave the Abbey Farm house. When she had taken courage to rush past the chained dog, and was at length leaning out of the middle window, she said amidst her panting,

“What a little way they have to go now! It will be all over presently. I wish I had come here at first.”

Joseph pointed out to her that the extent of the landscape had led her into a mistake. The church, the vicarage, and Mr. Parker’s hopground were as far apart as usual, though from this height they appeared to lie close together.

“And all this farm of yours looks like a bit of a garden,” observed Alice; “and there is the farm house where uncle Jerom lives, and his little church. They seem to belong to us,—they lie so near.”

“Dost thou see thy uncle Jerom himself?” asked Joseph.

Alice looked every where, she thought, and could not see him;—down the steep white path which descended from the summer house, past the sheep-fold to the stile, but no one was there but Mrs. Byrne, mounting step by step;—along the grey abbey wall,—but nothing cast a shadow there in this fine May sunshine, but a ladder placed against the wall among the fruit-trees:—into the farm yard,—but if uncle Jerom was one of the moving group there, she could not distinguish him. Mrs. Lambert, with her white cap, and the churchwardens with their wands were alone recognizable. Somebody was stealing about in the churchyard, but so feebly, that he must be thirty

years older than uncle Jerom. She saw, finally, a black dot or two on the green meadow which stretched far away to the right; but whether these were horses, cows, or men, she could defy Joseph to pronounce. She had not looked every where yet. Mrs. Byrne had by this time entered; but she was too breathless and dizzy to supply any effective eyesight. Alice must try again, assisted by a broad hint from Joseph. "O, I see, I see! but who would have thought of looking there?—in that bare field,—all in confusion with new banks and ditches. That is uncle Jerom, however; I know by his leaning backwards upon his stick, with both his hands behind him. What is he standing there for, as if he was looking for the stars to come out?"

"I dare say he is waiting for our friends,—perhaps to shake hands with thee across the boundary. The boundary passes along those new enclosures, as we shall see presently."

"There, Jane," said Alice to her nurse; "you are the only person, I do believe, that would not let me go the rounds. I am sure papa would have let me go, if you had said nothing about it; and there is uncle Jerom waiting for me now. I will go, after all," she declared, jumping down from the chair on which she was lolling.

Mrs. Byrne believed uncle Jerom would be as much surprised to see his niece under such circumstances, as to behold the stars come out which Alice supposed him to be looking for through the sunshine. Joseph declared that the whole ceremony would be over before Alice could reach the new enclosures.

"Thoud'st better stay, and see what thou canst from this place, if I may advise," said he. "It is my opinion that they are going to leave our farm yard now."

"There they go! how slowly they seem to move!" cried Alice. "Those boys with the green boughs are certainly running as fast as they can go; but they scarcely get on at all. Though you say I must not go, there is Mrs. Lambert following them, you see. Look, Jane! why should not we be walking there as well as Mrs. Lambert?—O dear! she is turning back. She only went to see that the gate was shut,—that those staring calves might not take it into their heads to go too, I suppose.—No. They had rather stay with her. Do look how they rest their heads on her shoulders!"

Mrs. Byrne was now rested; and she came to see what was the reason of the shout which seemed to be prodigious, however faint it was made by distance. Joseph believed that there had been some jealousy between this parish and the next about the tithes being unequal, or something being wrong about the provision for the clergyman. He did not well understand the matter, as he paid no tithes, and did not interfere in disputes which arose out of them: but he hoped all jealousies were to be buried in these new enclosures, and that this must be what the people were shouting for.

"Then, if you do not pay tithes," said Alice, — "But you will have quantities of hay, I am sure; and you see you have calves. Why do not you pay like other people?"

Joseph and Mrs. Byrne answered at the same moment. "My brother and I do not think it right to pay tithes. The Friends never pay tithes."

"No body that rents the Abbey Farm pays tithes."

"Well: if you do not pay tithes, I suppose there will be no hay-making for me to do in your meadows. I am to help to make papa's haycock in the rectory field."

"Has the vicar any claim upon the rectory field?"

"Yes; because papa says he is a specially endowed vicar."

"Dost thou know what that means?"

"No: I only know that we have had three dear little chickens from Sir William Hood's broods; and papa says we are to make a haycock, and to have some turnips by and bye, from the glebe."

"And he has some glebe land too, has not he?"

"Yes to be sure: you know our field very well. I have not forgotten what a race you once gave me there, when you made me run over the young beans.—How they do shake hands!—papa and uncle Jerom. Uncle Jerom is going home with papa to tea, I think. He steps over the new bank into the field, you see. I wish I might gather some wall-flowers to carry home for them."

Mrs. Byrne begged Joseph to be Alice's guardian, as he knew best how to silence the dog which would certainly bark, and frighten Alice. He must be particularly careful not to let her go too near the edge of the projection on which the summer-house was built, and where the very finest of the wall-flowers grew. She, meanwhile, would watch from the window, and call them if any thing more was to be seen.—It was not long before she gave notice that the boys had thrown their green boughs into a corner of the churchyard, and that the ceremony seemed to be finished, as many were dispersing to their homes. As soon, therefore, as Alice had gathered more wall-flowers than she could conveniently carry, she was ready to proceed towards the vicarage, provided her companions could settle whether she was to rest on the way at the Abbey Farm, or at Mrs. Byrne's cottage. It was certainly the Lamberts' turn, as she had been at her nurse's already to-day: but Mrs. Byrne had a little cream-cheese in readiness for the vicarage table, and she must go home with Alice, for the sake of carrying this cheese and a bunch of radishes for the gentlemen's supper, as they were to sup together to-night. So Joseph had no more to do than to see his charge safe down the hill, before he hastened home to refresh himself with a draught of the ale that might be left, and to tell his mother that cream-cheeses were liked at the vicarage.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter II.

INTERLOCUTORY DECREES.

Alice did not reach home before she was wanted. She found her father making tea;—the single domestic accomplishment in which the most abstracted student is seldom deficient. Mr. Hellyer knew his way to the tea-caddy, however he might lose himself in any other destination; and the tea made by him was never to be complained of, however much might be spilled by the way. His brother seemed to have intuitions equally bright respecting bread and butter. He could cut up a loaf with as much speed as he could demolish a bad argument; and the provision of the tea-table had half disappeared before Alice entered. A look from her uncle towards the radishes seemed to ask whether it was necessary that they should be left for supper. The fact was, that uncle Jerom had been on one of his literary excursions this day;—that is, that he had dined on a crust of bread which he had put in his pocket in the morning, to be eaten while looking over some books in the bookseller's shop at Y—, where he had liberty to go, from time to time, to keep himself on a level with the age, without buying any thing. Uncle Jerom rarely bought any thing; for the sufficient reason that he had scarcely any money to spend. When he had paid the low sum required for his board and lodging in a farm-house, he had just enough left to purchase a coat every two years, and new shirts when the old ones would hold together no longer. Hats were obliged to take their chance; and a poor chance it was, as any one might see who happened to meet him in the lanes with the brown, crooked-brimmed covering which hung down almost over his eyes. When his engagements allowed him to sit down to the common farm-house diet, his heart was strengthened with solid fat bacon, or bread and milk: but when he chanced to be elsewhere at meal times, he was sure to repair before night to his brother, with desponding views of the prospects of the church, and of the interests of mankind in general.—Thus it was to-day; and while the vicar gave half his mind to investigating whether the water boiled, Jerom required of the other half to prove that the spirit of innovation which was spreading over the land was not threatening to uproot the very foundations of religion, as incorporated with the church of England. His spirits were not cheered by the apparition of Alice, ornamented with the hat he had left in the hall,—the very brownest and most misshapen of all that he had ever exhibited.

“Papa, what a pity uncle Jerom's hat did not lie in the way when you spilled all that ink, this morning! I am sure it is browner than the carpet you spoiled.”

The vicar believed that he and his brother ought both to be thinking about new hats. It had occurred to him several times lately.

“Then you must let me have your old one, uncle. You cannot want it any more when you have a new one; and I want one for a scare-crow, for my radish bed. I shall never get another so ugly. Let me put it on you. Do be my scare-crow for a minute.”

Jerom put the little girl away, bidding her pour out his tea, and occupy herself with her own. He could not spare the hat. The clergy were fallen on evil days, and had not need give away any thing till something was done for them, instead of the little they had being taken away.

“I have reason to complain of the last,” observed the vicar; “but can you exactly say that nothing is done for the church? I suppose you mean, new measures. But this Bounty is something to you, is not it? You were very eager for it, I remember.”

“It is Queen Anne that we must thank, if we must thank any body. But this bounty ought not to be so called. It is a mere restoration of the property of the church, which had been usurped. It is folly to call it a gift.”

“Still, it is something done for the church, to take these first fruits and tenths from the rich clergy and give them to the poorer. It is something done for you, Jerom.”

“My first consideration is the church at large: and in that view, what is this bounty, after all? Its operation is slow and inconsiderable. Let it be managed as well as you will, it will be between two and three centuries before all the livings already certified will exceed 50*l.* a year. In the meantime, I must come back out of my grave, if I am ever to have 50*l.* a year from my living.”

“But it will be a great thing to see you settled in a parsonage house. It will be but a small one that can be built for 200*l.*: but I confess I am concerned for the dignity of the church; and I agree with you so far as to desire to see every living with the parsonage house and glebe land to which it is entitled by common right. I shall look with pleasure on the building of your little parsonage, and thank Queen Anne.”

“You will see no such building in my time, brother. What am I to do with a parsonage, when I have not the means of living in it? As soon as I heard that the lot had fallen upon me, I requested that the 200*l.* might be applied in some better way than building me a house that I could not afford to live in.”

“Do you mean to exchange it for tithes, or to let it be invested in lands? I hope, as you have objected to the house, that you will accept the amount in land.”

“Why? The rules allow me to exchange the bounty for an equal or greater amount of tithes, as well as for a different portion of land.”

“True: but I cannot make up my mind,—I have been long trying to make up my mind,—as to how far any traffic in tithes is agreeable to the divine law. I am sure, also, that you will be wise to keep clear of all unnecessary dealings with so uncertain and vexatious an article as tithes are now made. This last is only a secondary consideration; but —”

“I am not sure of that,” replied Jerom.

“The dignity of the church must be first consulted, Jerom: and I have a certain repugnance to any thing like speculation in so sacred a property as tithes. In my

opinion, the worst omen for the church is this peculiar revenue being in the hands of any laymen: and I much question whether the royal act of allowing lay impropriations be not the cause of the present adversity of the establishment.”

Alice looked up from her cup of tea, on hearing that tithe property was sacred. She asked, with a look of mortification,

“May not I play with the tithe lamb Mr. Parker sent this morning, papa? And he sent some eggs, too; and I bade Susan make a custard with them. Must not we eat any custard?”

“To be sure, my dear child. Why not?”

“I thought you said that what was tithe was sacred, papa.”

“Well, my dear, that does not prevent its being used. Do you forget what your Latin lesson was about, this morning?”

“About the bullocks that were offered to Jupiter. People did eat them, to be sure; and they were sacred. But those people were not Christians.”

“Which only shows, my dear child, that there are some things which are inherently sacred,—shown to be so by the light of reason and nature: and among these are tithes. You will find, hereafter, that the Phenicians paid tithes. So did the Egyptians and the Hindoos, as well as the Greeks and Romans: all which seems to prove that these nations must have been under one common guidance as to this institution. This is confirmed by a reference to the attributes of some of the heathen deities. Thus Apollo —”

“O, Apollo! The author of light —”

“Exactly so. Now mark what is conjoined with his being the source of light. He was emphatically called the ‘tithe-crowned,’ the ‘taker of tithes,’ and so on.”

“Then, papa, I will put some of Mrs. Parker’s mint and sage and parsley upon your head, and then you will be like Apollo.”

“As the Jews paid tithe in consequence of a divine revelation,” observed Jerom, “I should be disposed to doubt whether the tithe system arose from the light of nature.”

“Whether we so consider it, or conclude that it arose from some unrecorded revelation made to Adam,” returned the vicar, “my doubts remain as to whether this kind of property may be made the material of speculation, like any other kind of property.”

“But, papa, who took Adam’s tithes? Did he pay them to Eve, or to the angels? or, perhaps, to himself? Only, there would not be much use in that. If every body did so, I don’t know what would become of *us*.”

“I do not speak as from knowledge, child. I only mention what seems to me the most probable solution.—But, brother, there is further evidence, from its wide extension, of this being an institution of the highest origin, whether natural or revealed;—evidence which has not yet been duly improved. Governments have been supported in a vast majority of countries, by contributions analogous to our tithes;—contributions from the produce, not from the rent, of land.”

“Ancient Egypt, for instance. There the sovereign appropriated the fifth part, I believe, did not he?”

“A fifth, I believe: and the same was the case under the Mahomedan government in Bengal. In China, they take our exact proportion, one-tenth, which is a remarkable coincidence. Not that they are able to raise one-tenth —”

“Any more than ourselves.”

“Any more than ourselves; which extends the coincidence. In some provinces, a thirtieth is the utmost that can be levied.”

“Then I hope the coincidence will extend no further.”

“Indeed I don’t know,” sighing: “but my proportion becomes less every year. Those Asiatic governments have a power which we English clergy have not. They can help to improve the country from which they levy their tenths, while we can only claim the tithe, without having any title or power to aid its production. There is no inducement to a vicar, like myself, to plan a road, for instance, to some new market for produce, though my tithe might be much increased in value thereby. If I were a prince, on the other hand, I should do this directly, and profit by it.”

“And the land also; which seems to point out that this method of raising funds is better for a state than for a church, whose ministers can never have the same power of promoting improvement with those of a government.”

“But, papa, does the emperor of China take his fortune in hay or fruit, like you and Apollo, not in money? I should think it would be very easy to cheat him: and what a quantity of things he must have to stow away! And so must a clergyman in a very large parish.”

“Yes,” replied Jerom; “and that is the reason that tithes are generally paid in money, in large parishes. The tax would be so in China, too, I dare say, but that the mandarins like to have the collecting of it.”

“I think papa had better get a mandarin to collect his for him, if he finds that people cheat him, and do not pay him so much as they ought. Papa, I wish you would make me your mandarin. I should like to go about gathering eggs, and apples, and all the things that people pay you.”

“The mandarins have a different reason for liking to make these collections. They can cheat as well as the people under them. But yet, collecting under my own eye, as I do,

mine is a hard case;—it is hard that I cannot get my tenths of the articles which are as much the property of the church as of the farmer who refuses me my due.”

“Mrs. Byrne says, however, that her husband’s is a hard case. He has all the trouble of planting and rearing, she says; and ever so much goes to those who have had none of the toil and the cost.”

“Mrs. Byrne shall have a rebuke from me, my child, if she talks so to you. So long as she has lived in this house, she must have heard me say, that the whole of what grows out of the ground is no more the property of the grower, than the parsonage is the property of the bricklayer that builds it. Mr. Parker’s hops never were all his; and it is quite wrong in him to murmur about any of them being taken away. He has a partner. Sir William Hood is his partner; and yet Mr. Parker repines at every payment, as if he were obliged to give something that belonged to himself.”

“I would give something to Sir William Hood to persuade him to leave off being a partner,” Alice observed: “for it must be very provoking to have so much trouble about another person’s share of hops.”

“Our first duty is, child, to maintain the claims of the church; and now that discontent is spreading, every good minister of the church will assert his right rather than suit his convenience.—And, besides, I doubt whether any clergyman or other tithe-holder, has a right to make any arrangement which would be objected to by those who will come after him. The property is that of the church, not of the individual; and he must keep it inviolate, for his successor: not even planning any disposal of it which the church may not approve a thousand years hence.”

“That was precisely the argument used by our predecessors,” observed Jerom, “when they scrupled about paying their first fruits and tenths to any but the Pope. They feared not only excommunication, but what the church might say five hundred years afterwards. But we hear little now of excommunication, and nobody wishes to pay to the Pope. Seeing, therefore, how little can be known of what is to come after, and that nothing is at present done for the relief and aid of the church, I should be disposed to make such agreement as should yield advantage in our own day, leaving it to Heaven to protect its own gospel in time to come.”

“Would you really, then, advise my letting my tithes to Peterson, as he desires? Is that what you would say?”

Jerom knew nothing of Peterson’s desire to be the lessee of the vicar’s tithes. He was thinking now of his own affair,—the application of the share of Queen Anne’s Bounty which had fallen to him. He had the power of getting it invested in the land now in course of enclosure in his parish. An inducement to such an arrangement was added in the wish of the landlord of the Abbey Farm to give Jerom a slice off his new fields, in lieu of tithe for the remainder. The Lamberts were taking in these new fields, and were evidently watching, with some anxiety, what would be done about the tithe. Being quakers, they would not countenance this claim of the church; and it was natural that they should be desirous of the matter being settled in a way which should

save the necessity of resistance hereafter on their part, and aggression on that of the neighbouring clergyman. The matter remained in Jerom's choice,—whether he should seek the consent of the patron and ordinary to his accepting, for the period of his incumbency, an addition to his allotment in lieu of tithe on the Lamberts' new fields, or levy tithe upon his quaker neighbours. This was the argument which his spirit was revolving when Alice saw him from the summer-house, and thought he was watching for the stars to come out, while the sun was yet high.

The vicar looked full of consternation when he asked his brother whether he really meant to turn farmer. He knew the present law allowed the clergy to cultivate their allotments; but, in these evil days, when the holiness of the profession had suffered in the eyes of the people, no true church minister would run the risk of offence, by giving his attention to secular cares.

Very true, Jerom thought, if the church were duly protected: but, till its humblest ministers were sufficiently provided for, they must use the means that God put before them, to obtain bread. The employment of tilling the ground was a remarkably innocent and a primitive one, and there was less disgrace to the church in pursuing it, than in appearing in such a garb — in such —

“O, yes, your hat is very shabby indeed, uncle,” observed Alice. “But you would not object to uncle's fishing, papa: would you?”

“Fish, my dear, do not yield tithe of common right, though, in some places, they are titheable by custom. Where tithed, it is only a personal tithe, and must be paid to the church where the payer attends divine service and receives the sacraments; and in your uncle's parish, or mine, where there is neither sea nor a river where fish is taken for profit, there is no such tithe due. We have only ponds near, where fish are kept for pleasure; and it is agreed, as the law is uncertain on the point of such preserves of fish, that no claim for tithe shall be preferred. I have reason to know —”

“But I did not mean all this, papa. I asked you whether you would object to uncle Jerom's fishing. I suppose farming is no worse than fishing, and some of the Apostles were fishermen.—And you are often busy about other things besides your preaching, papa, or your books either. Remember the battle you had with Mr. Byrne, about the turkey, in the winter. Mrs. Byrne could scarcely help laughing, though you and Mr. Byrne seemed likely to pull the poor thing to pieces between you. O, uncle, you should have heard the noise, when papa was talking very loud about the church, and Mr. Byrne was in a great passion, and the turkey gobbled as loud as either of them.”

“Why, brother,” said Jerom, “did not you know that it was decided in the case of Houghton and Prince, that turkies are to be ranked among the things that are *feræ naturæ*; and consequently not titheable?”

“On the other hand, it was affirmed in the case of Carleton and Brightwell, that it does not appear but that turkies are birds as tame as hens, or other poultry, and must therefore pay tithes; and this was in the face of the plea that turkies were not brought from beyond sea before the time of Queen Elizabeth. My distinction is between their

being sold and spent in the house. However, I am willing to acknowledge that it would satisfy me well to place this part of my duty in the hands of a lessee, if I could be thoroughly persuaded that I should not thereby betray my responsibility and the dignity of the church.”

Jerom thought that if turkies must be wrestled for, it was more for the dignity of the church that it should be done by Peterson than by the vicar. He was by no means bent on farming his own land. He was rather disposed to let it. If the vicar would also let his tithes, he believed that both might be easy in conscience as to the guardianship of their trust.

“Moreover,” observed the vicar, “it will be in some sort an advantage to the church that Peterson should have the collecting of its dues in this parish, inasmuch as, with all my endeavours, I am compelled to forego many claims which I know to be just; and for another reason which I will presently relate. As to foregoing my claims,—I am well assured that I do not recover more than two-thirds of that to which I have a just claim; and I thus become guilty under the article of the ecclesiastical constitution which declares that those who, from the fear of man, shall not demand their whole tithe with effect, shall be liable to pay a fine to the archdeacon for disobedience.”

“If that article were put in force, how many of our brethren would be proved liable! On the average, they are thought to forego forty, and some say fifty per cent, of their dues.”

“God knows I have laboured diligently to avoid this sin! No pastor has brought more actions for an equal amount: and I have written to the justices so often that they begin, I fear, to be weary of my informations. But what can I do else for the ease of my conscience? The distraint and sale of Stratten’s goods last year caused me to lie awake a whole night from concern for the recusant; and I believe I could not have gone through with the affair but for the fear of being myself disobedient to the law of the church.”

“I saw little Mary Stratten to-day, sitting at the workhouse gate as you went by,” observed Alice. “She is not nearly so puny now,—since they all went into the workhouse,—as she was when you brought her in to be warmed and have a bit of bread that day in the winter. But, papa, Mr. Peterson will not prevent my making your hay, will he? You know you promised that I might make up your haycock in the rectory-field: and I told Joseph Lambert so, this afternoon.”

“It will be Mr. Peterson’s haycock, my child: but he will allow you to make sport with the haymakers, I do not doubt. And this reminds me, brother, of my other reason for allowing Peterson to become my lessee. I may thereby avoid all intercourse (unless on purely spiritual matters) with the person who is about to inhabit the rectory.”

“Ah! I heard that Sir William had let the rectory to a gentleman for two or three years; and I hoped he might be a prop to the church in this neighbourhood.”

“So far from it, that I must be incessantly vigilant lest he should poison the streams at which our flocks must drink.”

“Poison!” exclaimed Alice. “O, papa! is Mr. Mackintosh a bad man?”

“Go, my dear child, and occupy yourself in something pleasant till we send for you,” said the vicar.

“Papa, uncle Jerom has not done eating yet: and you know if you once send me away, you will forget to send for me again. You always do.”

The vicar, however, did not choose that his little daughter should have her mind contaminated by any ideas about infidelity, and uncle Jerom therefore resolutely pushed from him the last remains of the loaf, and Alice withdrew, full of curiosity about poisoning, and the dreadful thing, whatever it was, that was the matter with Mr. Mackintosh. She chose to employ herself in watering the flower-bed below the parlour window,—not for the purpose of overhearing, which was out of the question,—but that her father might, by seeing her, be reminded, in the midst of his affection for mother-church, that he had a daughter. She could not give up her privilege of being called ‘dear child,’ the last thing before she went to bed. She saw that papa and uncle had drawn their chairs close together, and that they looked very much like people talking secrets. And so they were.

“What! absolutely deistical? Well; such an open boast is better than concealed infidelity. Will have nothing to say to a clergyman? Then we are saved the trouble of declining his acquaintance. But how came Sir William to let his house to such a man? Living upon the church, as Sir William does, he might refrain from setting her interests at defiance by showing any countenance to such a man. You will begin a course on the Evidences directly, I suppose.”

“Immediately; though my custom has been to deliver them in the winter. But, Jerom;—your hat. It is not becoming that such a hat should be seen within the precincts of your church; and I would not give occasion of scandal to this unbeliever. I am afraid, Jerom, that you have no money.”

Jerom threw down two half-crowns,—the whole of his present wealth. The vicar shook his head, and drew out of an unlocked drawer his canvas money-bag. It was not very rich; but he concluded that it should furnish Jerom and himself with new hats, and that the supply of their further wants should be left to the evolution of circumstances.

“And now, about the purchase of them,” said the vicar. “One of us may as well put the vicarial office upon the other: for it is disagreeable to buy a hat; and no more awkward to buy two than one.”

“But our heads are not of the same size,” objected Jerom. “If it were not for the shabbiness of my own hat, I should propose that we should go together to the hatter’s, the next time I am called by the new literature to Y—. As it is, I propose that you

should make the adventure first; and then I will borrow your hat for the occasion, and follow your example.”

It was finally settled thus; and that Jerom should accept an allotment in the new inclosures, to be cultivated by a tenant, while the vicar was to let his dues, consisting of his endowment of hay, and of his small tithes, to Peterson; it being kept a secret from his parishioners that Peterson had anything to do with the tithes but to collect them. The vicar feared lest the bargain being known should lessen the little respect there was among the people for the claims of the church. All this had long been settled, and the brothers were deeply engaged in an argument upon a point of ecclesiastical history, when Alice tapped at the window, and asked disconsolately if she might not come in, because she had left her doll's right shoe under the parlour table, and she could find nothing more to do in the garden. Susan said she would drown the flowers if she went on watering them any longer. And, besides, it was almost time now for the cream cheese: they had been so long, Susan said, over their tea.—Leave granted.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter III.

INTRUSION.

Mr. Mackintosh came and took possession of the rectory at Midsummer. He was a single gentleman, everybody was surprised to find. Nothing was heard of either mother or sister who might make his home comfortable; and why such a handsome gentleman, rich enough, it was supposed, and certainly not past middle age, should be still single, was more than could be comprehended by the people of the parish. His housekeeper was questioned; but the housekeeper knew nothing of the how and the why. She could only tell that her master was sometimes low-spirited, and apt to find fault with people; and that he was so fond of his books and of business that he did not seem to have time for the society of ladies. She had never heard anything of his being engaged to be married; and, for her own part, she could not believe that it was so at present; for her master seemed to be as anxious about matters within his little domain as if he had nothing to look to beyond.

It was indeed true that he looked into his business with a keen eye;—with the keen eye of one who wants occupation, and therefore vehemently takes up whatever comes before him. He was the owner of the Abbey Farm, and of another in the neighbourhood, — the Quarry Wood farm, — which was now out of lease; and there were no bounds to the diligence with which he walked over both, from day to day, in order to investigate the condition of every part in every conceivable respect. Both the Lamberts were sure to tell, every day at their early dinner, that they had met their landlord in two opposite directions, while their mother had nearly as often to mention the variety of questions she had been requested to answer, and the odd kind of chat she had had with friend Mackintosh. He was incessantly visiting the cottage at Quarry Wood, to know if any one had called to view the vacant farm; and his housekeeper believed he knew almost every blade of grass in the rectory garden, and was sorry he did not rent the glebe as well as the dwelling, as it would have afforded him something more to do. He was no favourite with the neighbours; for his manners were haughty and careless. Byrne was the only person known to take heartily to him: but Byrne seemed on such friendly terms with him that there must certainly be something kindly in him; for Byrne was not apt to attach himself easily. He had actually left his work at the Abbey Farm, several times, in order to serve Mr. Mackintosh. When tried by the common and best test of kindness, Mr. Mackintosh, however, was found wanting. He was not always kind to children; as Alice could testify.

She ran in, one day, at her nurse's, in tears,—in a passion of mingled anger and woe. She had been watching, this fortnight, for the symptoms of an intention to cut the grass at the rectory. She had looked through the garden paling, every day, and had seen the grass growing longer and longer on the lawn, till the wind waved it as if it had been ripening corn. Papa had promised for a whole year, that she should make his haycock; and Susan had given her a hay-rake, just tall enough for her, on her last birth-day. Mrs. Byrne herself had told her on Tuesday, that the grass was to be cut this

day, if the weather should be fine. Alice had jumped out of bed an hour before Susan called her, to see how bright the sun was shining; and now, after all, Mr. Mackintosh would not admit her to make hay because she was the vicar's daughter.

"My dear, that cannot be the reason. There has been no time yet for Mr. Mackintosh to quarrel with your papa. I dare say he does not like to have little girls running about his grass plat; though I see no great harm that you could do him and his grass."

"But he said himself that it was because I was the vicar's daughter; and that he would have nobody belonging to a clergyman go near him."

"Well, that does agree with his saying that he would not let the Quarry Farm to any religious people; superstitious people, as he calls them."

"I don't think I am very religious. He might as well let me go in and make hay," murmured Alice, relapsing into tears.

"Come and look at my bees," said Mrs. Byrne. "You should see how they have got on with the comb since you were here. Since we laid out the bed for the thyme—Take care, my dear; you will upset the milk. There! there goes your hat into it! Dear! dear! how came you not to see the milk pail?"

While she plunged the straw bonnet in water, to get rid of the milk in which it had already been dipped, Alice asked how the milk pail happened to stand there, full in the sun, where the milk would be sure to turn sour before night. How could she help stumbling over it?

And she was about to remove it into a better place; but Mrs. Byrne stopped her. Byrne would be angry if it was moved. She had promised that it should stand in that place and nowhere else. If Alice's bonnet should be quite spoiled, Byrne and Mr. Peterson must settle it between them which should buy her another, for Mrs. Byrne could not take upon herself to say which was answerable for the milk standing there. It did seem a sin and a shame that the milk should be turning sour there, when the neighbours she usually supplied were doing without.

"Then why do not you let them have it?"

"It is tithe milk. As we do not make cheese, Mr. Peterson will have us set by every tenth milking for your papa's tithe. There is a dispute between him and my husband as to which ought to carry the milk. Mr. Peterson says that my husband is bound to carry it, either to the vicarage or to the church porch; and I would have taken it myself to the church porch, to save quarrelling, but my husband stopped me. He is sure that he has the law on his side in making the tithe-taker send his own pails for the milk; and so here it stands spoiling. I make the less stir about it that Mr. Peterson now collects the tithes instead of the vicar himself."

Alice was immediately bent on going to tell Mr. Peterson that he had better send for the milk; or, perhaps, authorize her to carry it. This was exactly such an enterprise as suited Alice. She seized every opportunity of following a swarm of bees, or of driving

pigs, or of helping to push sheep into the water before shearing. She had never recovered the prohibition to go the bounds of the parish; and had a secret plan to do it by herself some day, to show that she could. Mrs. Beverley would let her through her house, she was sure; and Joseph Lambert was too good-tempered to quarrel with her for climbing his hedge. Meantime, it would be good entertainment, in a small way, to haul a full milk-pail half through the parish, without spilling a drop; and she could sit down in the church porch to grow cool when the task was done.

Mrs. Byrne would not allow this; that was the worst of it. Alice grew cross. Nobody would let her-do as she liked this day. She would not now look at the bees; nor gather herself a nosegay; nor try whether she could not find green peas enough ripe to make a little dish for her papa's supper; nor dust Mrs. Byrne's prized collection of shells and birds' eggs. Nothing would she do but go down again to the rectory garden, and peep through the palings to watch the mowing, and the process of tedding the grass, the delicious process which she must not aid. Mrs. Byrne foresaw that the smell of the hay would be a provocative to melancholy, and sighed when she found all her blandishments in vain, and that the wilful girl would have her way.

She was still looking grave over the kneading of the dumpling for her husband's dinner, when Alice came back, seeming much disposed to fly but for the care she was taking of something in her frock, which was turned up round her, and made the depôt of something very precious. The hay-making seemed all forgotten, with every other grief, and Alice was trembling with pleasure.

"The milk-pail! the milk-pail, my dear," cried Mrs. Byrne. "Bless me! how nearly you were in again, you giddy thing! What can you have got in your lap? What a lot of eggs! Partridge's eggs! What a number!"

"O, they will get cold, if you don't make haste," cried Alice. "I came as quick as ever I could without breaking them. Mr. Byrne says they will be hatched, if you put them near the fire before they have grown cold."

"I did not think he would have ventured to take them from under the hen. I wonder what Mr. Mackintosh will say if he finds it out," observed Mrs. Byrne, bustling about to seek a shallow basket, which, lined with a flannel petticoat, and placed near the fire, might serve as a warm nest for the fourteen eggs.

"The poor hen partridge is dead," said Alice. "She was sitting on the eggs when Mr. Byrne cut off her head, poor thing, with his scythe. He saw me through the pales, and gave me the eggs, and bade me come to you with them; but before I left, the cock partridge came home; and there he is walking about, poor fellow, in the middle of the grass, just as if he was too unhappy to be afraid of any body. But when do you think these eggs will be hatched?"

Very soon, if at all, Mrs. Byrne thought. She advised Alice to stay here and watch, instead of going down to the rectory any more to-day. It was not likely that more partridges' eggs would be found; and she had remembered since Alice left her—(she

was sorry she had forgotten it before)—that she might make hay, after a manner, in this garden, though she did not pretend that it could compare with the rectory garden.

“You see, however, that it is very well I went,” said Alice, with a superior air. “Now I should like to stay and watch the eggs. Papa will not mind about my going home to dinner, just to-day.”

Mrs. Byrne forthwith made another dumpling, and Alice stood, growing hotter every moment, close by the fire, peeping in between the folds of the flannel, in the incessant expectation of seeing a tiny bird’s head pop up. Mrs. Byrne soon perceived that she would at this rate totally exhaust herself before anything could come to pass, and opened up again her proposition about hay-making in the garden. The grass borders were somewhat overgrown, and there was a little plat,—a very small one, to be sure,—behind the cottage, where Mrs. Byrne hung out the linen to dry. From this plat a good deal of grass might be cut with Byrne’s shears; if they could be found; and Alice could be called in the first moment that a bird was hatched. It would be a fine thing to show people that Alice could make hay in other places besides the rectory garden.

Alice looked at the borders, and thought it would be a prodigious condescension. The sight of the rusty shears, however, subdued her pride; and as soon as Mrs. Byrne’s coarsest blue apron could be tied over the young lady’s frock, she was down on her knees, clipping and hacking at the dry grass, and severing as much as a handful in a quarter of an hour. She actually forgot her new property of eggs till Byrne came home to dinner, and startled her with his gruff voice, while she was trying to clip a bunch which was too obstinate for her shears. She looked up, vexed at being interrupted, but sufficiently exhausted to be in need of her dinner; and no vexation could withstand the news that three little partridges were huddling together and tumbling over one another in the basket.

No vexation of hers could withstand this news. Byrne’s was too highly wrought to be conquered so easily. He came home in a most terrible temper indeed. His wife was aghast when she heard how he abused Peterson, the church, and even the vicar himself, before Alice. Peterson had come down to the rectory to demand tithes of the mown grass, which Mr. Mackintosh had contemptuously refused, on the ground of there being no claim. Mr. Mackintosh had said that while the church had taken care that every other party should pay to the church, it had also taken care of itself, and had decreed that the church should not pay to the church. The parson might not pay to the vicar, or the vicar to the parson. Much as he hated the church, therefore, he was now sheltered under its wings; and not a blade of rectory grass should the vicar touch.—Well; what answer did Peterson make? Why; it was the most provoking thing in the world; he had his law book in his pocket, (as he seemed always to have,) and he showed that in the case of a vicar being specially endowed, (as Mr. Hellyer was,) small tithes, and even hay, might be levied upon the impropiator’s ground, as well as other people’s. Mr. Mackintosh said some very sound, good things, Byrne thought, when he found he really was liable. He said he thought it would be no more than fair to leave people to choose whether they would have a religion or not; and that they

might as well demand from him his meat and drink to maintain Punch in a puppet-show—

Mrs. Byrne stopped her husband by throwing a bit of partridge's egg-shell at him to make him look up, just when Alice's eyes began to open wide with expectation of what it was that was to be likened to Punch in a puppet-show. It was grief enough to Mrs. Byrne that her husband should snatch up Mr. Mackintosh's revolting sayings about religion; she would not have this child exposed to the evil under her roof; and so she had told her husband. He went on muttering, while he tore his dumpling to pieces, that he did not believe Mr. Mackintosh would allow the grass to be carried away; and, for his part, he hoped he would not. It was time somebody was beginning to resist encroachment, or there was no saying what pass the parish would come to. He had seen, and so had his father, how the burden of tithes grew and grew; but it was not till he told the facts to Mr. Mackintosh, and Mr. Mackintosh explained them, that Byrne knew the reason why the burden must always go on to increase, unless the church should —

Here he was again stopped. His wife wondered whether Mr. Mackintosh could explain why tithes were only half the amount in the next parish. If the soil was really equally good in the two parishes, it was very odd that wheat land should yield twelve shillings per acre of tithe here, and only six shillings in the next parish.

“I have known a worse case than that; where fourteen shillings were paid for an acre on one side a hedge, and five and sixpence for an acre on the other side, of precisely the same quality of soil. But, bad as it is to have to depend on parsons' tempers, and such accidents, it is not so bad as seeing the tithe go on growing and growing, and knowing that it will never stop, unless such men as Mr. Mackintosh put a short stop to it. Ah! you look frightened; but you had better look frightened at the tithes than at any thing that I say about Mr. Mackintosh. In my father's time and mine, I'll tell you what has happened. Rent is higher, as you know only too well from every farmer you meet. The rise of tithe helps rent to rise; and the tithes have trebled while rent has risen one-fourth. Rent has risen fast enough; but tithes have risen twelve times as much.”

Mrs. Byrne thought this must be a mistake; because if matters went on at this rate, there must come an end of tithe, and tillage, and all.

“And so there will, if tithe goes on. Tithes are higher than the rent now, in some spots hereabouts, where hops and other expensive articles are grown. And the reason why it must be so is so plain, that Mr. Mackintosh does not believe but that those who made tithe foresaw all that is coming to pass. The tithe is part of the crop, which cost a vast deal of toil and expense to raise; and as the toil and expense of raising a crop increase, the tithe must become a larger and larger share of the profit. Don't you see?”

“To be sure, the more it costs to grow a bushel of corn, the dearer the corn will be, and the more value there will be in the tenth part. But if the tithe makes corn and other things dearer, and their being dearer raises the value of the tithe again, there can be nothing but ruin before us.”

“Except to the church, which is to fatten on our starvation, Mr. Mackintosh says.”

“But this makes a fine profit for the Lamberts, and those who pay no tithe, and yet sell their corn as dear as other people.”

“To be sure it is; for every farmer, in Wales or Scotland, or wherever else in the kingdom he may be, that holds tithe-free land. Where some are obliged to sell dear, as the tithe-payers are, those few that could sell cheaper are sure to follow, as long as there is too little instead of too much of what they have to sell; and the tithe-free thus profit at the expense of those who buy bread and hay. However, we should not talk of the farmers profiting, except as far as they can get their burden of tithes lightened during their lease. The Lamberts pay a fine rent for the Abbey Farm, in consideration of its being tithe-free; and if tithes were to be done away by the time their lease is out, their rent would be lowered to meet the fall of prices that would take place. So it is their landlord that gains from their land being tithe-free, except for the convenience of having no mischief made in their field, and for the price of corn rising as tithe rises while their lease runs. Their rent will be raised again, Mr. Mackintosh says, if tithing goes on at the present rate in the parish.”

“I always think no people look so like prosperous folks as the Lamberts.”

“Ah! the old man was a thrifty one; and ’tis said there are no better farmers in the county than his sons. Sir William will make no difficulty of letting them keep the Abbey Farm in the family as long as he and they have to do with lands, as long as they keep on this side Sticks, as Mr. Mackintosh says; but I don’t know what he means exactly.”

“I do,” said Alice; “Styx is the river where dead people get across in a boat.”

“Well; do you believe that, now? I would as soon believe what your father preaches ___”

“O, no, nobody believes about Styx now,” said Alice. “Mr. Mackintosh only talks as some people used to talk, hundreds of years ago, because he does not choose to talk as people talk now.”

Byrne shook his head. His opinion of Mr. Mackintosh was lowered. It was a pity Mr. Mackintosh did not speak of something that he really believed, instead of something that had been already disbelieved hundreds of years ago.

“How neat Mrs. Lambert looks now! and how quick she always walks!” said Alice, quitting her dinner. “I will call her in to see my birds and the eggs.”

There was no occasion to make haste to call Mrs. Lambert. She was coming to Byrne’s cottage. She had a smile for Alice, though she was evidently in haste to say something.

“I wish, friend,” said she to Byrne, “that that thou wouldst make haste down to the rectory. They want thee there; and thy dinner will keep, I dare say.”

“What’s the matter?” cried Byrne, seizing his hat. “Is that scoundrel Peterson kicking up a row?”

“I scarcely know,—being a little dull of apprehension, compared with thee, as to who is the scoundrel when people fall out, and whether there must be one. However, I can tell thee this;—that there is a great empty waggon, with five horses in it, at the rectory gate, and Peterson is making a show of it; and George Mackintosh stands at his garden pales, trying how provoking he can look, as it seems to me. The people are gathering, and the quarrel runs high. If thou canst bring either to a soft answer, thou wilt do a good deed. But, Byrne,” (calling after him,) “I assure thee they are ready enough with the word scoundrel already. Do not thou help them.”

Alice flew after Byrne. Mrs. Byrne thought it necessary to follow Alice; and Mrs. Lambert had been on her way to Mr. Mackintosh on business, when the gathering of the crowd made her turn back. She therefore walked down the road once more, hoping that her landlord would soon be able to listen to what she had to say.

All was in uproar at the rectory. The garden gate was laid by itself on a bank in the road. The heavy waggon was making deep ruts in the grass plat, which the feet of the five cart-horses had already torn up. The tithe of grass was being thrown in, amidst the laughter of the spectators, any one of whom could have carried it home in a well-packed wheelbarrow. The housekeeper was crying at one window, and her master was standing at another, with his hand in his bosom, no word on his tongue, but awful threatenings of the law on his brow. Byrne was evidently in a fury, though a sign from Mr. Mackintosh positively forbade his offering any opposition to Peterson and his team. He struck his toe into the cut turf, as a bull would have struck his horns; and like a bull, threw up clods into the air.

Peterson coolly expounded the law, the whole time, though none seemed disposed to take note of it, unless it was the horses, who certainly strained their muscles more zealously, and struck their hoofs deeper, and jingled their harness more emphatically, when he cracked his whip in the pauses of his lecture.

“I have spared you some of the trouble I might have given, if I had enforced my right,” said he. “By common right, the tithe grass may be made into hay upon the spot, and I might have turned in labourers to work on the ground for a couple of days. And then, again, I have not suffered my horses to touch a blade of your grass, Mr. Mackintosh.”

Somebody observed that he would have had to answer for it in law if he had permitted his horses so to act.

“By no means,” replied Peterson. “What does the law say?” (Reading.) “ ‘And when he comes with his carts, teams, or other carriages, to carry away his tithes, he must not suffer his horses or oxen to eat and depasture the grass growing in the grounds where the tithes arise; much less the corn there growing or cut. But,’ ” (with emphasis,) “ ‘if his cattle do in their passage, against the will of the driver, here and there snatch some of the grass, this is excusable.’ ”

“Against the will of the driver,” repeated some. “No thanks to you, Peterson.”

“It seems to me that making little laws like this is quite fit work for the pharisees,” thought Mrs. Lambert. “The weighty matters of the law seem to find no room here, any more than among those that were so busy with their mint, and anise, and cummin.”

Peterson proceeded. “ ‘If any person do stop or let the parson, vicar, proprietor, owner, or other of their deputies, or farmers, to view, take, and carry away their tithes as above said; he shall forfeit double value, with costs; to be recovered in the ecclesiastical court.’ 2 and 3, Edward VI. c. 13. s. 2. ‘And if the owner of the soil, after he has duly set forth his tithes, —’ ”

“I wish the devil had taken me before I set out the tithe, let the law say what it will,” thought Mr. Mackintosh. “I wish I had bid defiance to the law and the fellow at the same time.”

“ ‘Will stop up the ways,’ ” proceeded Peterson, “ ‘and not suffer the parson to carry away his tithes, or to spread, dry, and stack them upon the land, this is no good setting forth of his tithes without fraud within the statutes; but the parson may have an action upon the said statute, and may recover the treble value; or may have an action upon the case for such disturbance; or he may, if he will, break open the gate or fence which hinders him, and carry away his tithes.’ Which is what I have been and am doing, Mr. Mackintosh.”

“So I perceive.”

“Well, sir. What do you say to what I have just read?”

“That you shall hear in court.”

“You cannot say that I have not, in the words of my authority, been ‘cautious that he commit no riot, nor break any gate, rails, lock, or hedges, more than necessarily he must for his passage.’ You cannot say so, sir.”

“I have nothing to say to you,” replied Mr. Mackintosh, stepping out upon his mangled lawn from the window. “Whatever I have to say relates to your principal and to his church.”

“Take care how you blame my principal, sir,” said Peterson; concealing, as desired by the vicar, the fact that these tithes had become his own property. “My principal, sir, asks no more than his right: and if he is guilty at all in the eye of the law, it is for requiring much less than his due.”

“Well, if your principal chooses to live by such a right, let him. If he chooses, for the sake of a mere life interest in such an institution, to pay his rent of servility and dependence to the oligarchy, I wish him joy of his contentment in his holy office. The church is the patrimony of the oligarchy,—that is, the emoluments of the church;—and these emoluments purchase support for the oligarchy. If your principal

hopes for salvation while he is helping his employers to confirm their own corrupt dominion, for the oppression of the people, he is even a greater simpleton than I take him to be. And so you may tell him, if you happen to understand what I say.”

Everybody present understood that something was said about the vicar and being a simpleton; and a smile went round. Byrne had no doubt that, so much being true, all the rest must be very fine; and he was vehement in his applause. Peterson turned round to him, and declared that he had some business with him which he would not be long in disclosing. With an air of defiance, Byrne invited the lessee to come and hear his opinions on his own premises. Mrs. Byrne trembled for the consequences of the proposed visit; and earnestly hoped that it would not take place till the minds of both parties had cooled. She would do her utmost with her husband to convince him of the uselessness of contending with the law. If Mr. Mackintosh chose to go into court, that was no reason why a labouring man should incur such expense and vexation. It would be far better to pay tithe out of their garden, which was what Peterson was going to demand, she supposed, than to run any risk by refusal. The vicar had always paid her wages readily when she was a servant in his family, and she should be sorry to make any difficulty about paying his dues, now that it was her husband’s turn to recompense service.

The throng of gazers and mockers naturally followed the waggon. Byrne and another labourer began lifting the gate, in order to set it again upon its hinges; but Mr. Mackintosh desired that it might lie where it was, till a legal opinion should have been obtained as to whether more force had been used than the occasion required, and than the law could justify. Presently, no one was left but the gentleman and Mrs. Lambert, who was not disposed to leave her business to be propounded on another occasion, merely because Mr. Mackintosh had lately been in a passion, and was now out of humour.

“I thought thou hadst been wiser,” observed Mrs. Lambert, in her plain way, “than to cause thyself all this mischief. It seems to me a pity to spoil a pretty place in this manner, without doing any good that I see.”

“No good! It is doing good to resist paying tithe.”

“I agree with thee there. We Friends think it not lawful to pay tithes.”

“No; you let the parson come and seize them. This is a degree better than paying them; but what good has been done by such a resistance as that?”

“I might ask what good has been done by your resistance. Here is your little lawn spoiled; and ill-will confirmed between the vicar and his people. It will not affect thee so much as me, perhaps, that there has been a scandal to religion, too. Ah! I see thee smile; and I am far from thinking that there is religion in taking tithe: but the man who preaches religion in this parish has been held up to scorn; and I fear the contempt may spread to what he preaches. Thou wouldst not object to this? Well, now, if thou wilt let me say so, I do wonder that one who talks of liberty as thou dost, should be so unwilling to allow liberty of judgment to others.”

Mr. Mackintosh protested that the one thing he was always striving after was to emancipate people's judgments from the monstrous superstitions, the incredible follies which they called faith and religion, and so on. He was for ever trying to set people's judgments free.

"Rather, to make them think like thee, shouldst thou not say? There is a contempt in thy way of speaking of Christians, and others who differ from thee, which I should be apt to call oppression, dost thou know? No person hinders thee from saying what thy own opinions are, and where other people's are wrong; and, therefore, what occasion is there for trying to persuade thy neighbours that their clergyman must be a bad man, if he be not a fool. I think thee wrong in doing this, and I say so when opportunity offers, though I have no better an opinion than thou of his clergyman's gown, and of all the forms which he mixes up with his public worship."

"Then you must let me declare you wrong."

"That such is thy opinion. Certainly. But I wonder thou art easy in making thyself answerable for mixing up with Martha Lambert's follies some things which are of graver importance;—things which, true or false, make or mar a great deal of happiness, and cannot, therefore, be whiffed away, like trifles, with a joke. Thou wert free, last Sunday, to go into the fields instead of the church, and to tell every one that passed why there should be, as thou thinkest, no church going: but I do not see that it was more proper for thee to point at thy neighbours of the church and the meeting, and say that they differed only in going to see Punch in a wig and Punch in a broad-brim, than it would be in the Lamberts to say that thou desiredst the perdition of mankind because thou dost not worship as they do."

"Whoever told you of that speech of mine should have added what I said besides;—that the Quakers are the only Christians I respect, on account of their—"

"That is all very well in its way: but I do not ask for compliments to the Friends, but for justice to everybody. I could wish to see thee go to law, (as thy conscience allows it,) rather than hold up the good vicar to scorn. Thou wilt allow the suggestion."

"Ah! you have not that resource. The Friends do not go to law when they believe themselves wrongfully tithed."

"Their reference is to the divine, not to human law. Their pleas against tithe are three, which would avail nothing in a court of law;—that the interference of civil governments with spiritual concerns is unauthorized and unholy—"

"True, true."

"That the tithe system is a return to the Levitical law, which can have no place under a profession of Christianity."

Mr. Mackintosh smiled his utter contempt of both Judaism and Christianity.

“And that religion can never be lawfully made a trade; the rule of the case being the precept, ‘Freely ye have received; freely give.’ If thou dost not agree in this last, but thinkest, as the generality do, that the setting forth of spiritual things deserves hire in the same way as the teaching of the mathematics, and other things that belong to the mind, there is the less reason for thy pronouncing that the vicar must be a bad man or a simpleton for requiring the maintenance that the law allows him.”

“It is an infamous practice! The oppression is intolerable. The injustice is what nobody ought to endure. That we should have the church of Rome over again at this time of day! Your favourite vicar may be just such a simpleton of a priest as one might find in the old Popish days, in country villages: but what a poor wretch to set to teach the people!

“Suppose, then, we try to mend the law that displeases us both so much. If the law makes the vicar do and expect what thou thinkest folly, a wiser law might enable him to conduct himself more wisely in thy eyes. My sons will be happy to conduct thee to affix thy name to a petition of the Friends against tithes, which is lying for signature in the next town.”

Mr. Mackintosh would have a petition of his own, whenever he signed one for such a purpose. He would not mix himself up with Christians in any way. He should petition at once for the overthrow of all superstition in this country.

“And, of course, that thou shouldst be appointed judge of what is superstition, and what is not; for I fear thou art not else likely to be satisfied. Meantime, I fear thou wilt not let the Quarry Wood farm to superstitious people.”

“Not unless I were sure that their superstition did not make them cheats: as superstition generally does.”

“Have the Lamberts cheated thee in their management of the Abbey Farm?”

“No. I had rather let your sons have the Quarry Wood farm than any soft, sneaking tithe-payer. Every man that is a slave to the church is an enemy to me.”

“And all who pay tithes are slaves to the church. I am sorry for thee, George Mackintosh, for I think, at this rate, no man has ever had so many enemies. I presume that thou, as a scholar, hast as long a list of the tithe-payers of all the world from the beginning, as the vicar himself. He would make one believe that the Friends alone are, as thou sayst, not slaves to the church, and therefore thy allies.”

“I offered the Quarry Wood farm at a very low rent, if I could find a tenant that I approved,” said Mr. Mackintosh. “Your sons shall have it at that low rent, in consideration of—of—”

“Of their opinions on one point happening to suit thy own. This is the principle by which thou wouldst secure perfect liberty of thought and speech. However, I shall be glad if my sons can come to an agreement with thee in time to prevent any one from professing himself an infidel in order to obtain thy farm at a low rent. It is creditable

to the public that thy advertisement to such persons has not already answered to thy satisfaction.”

Superstition was too strong and too popular yet for individuals, Mr. M. replied. Most men had not the courage to put themselves in a position of defiance, such as he had in this case offered.

“Thou wilt now withdraw thy advertisement,” urged Mrs. Lambert. “There is no fear of my sons being taken for any thing but what they are by those who know them: but I should be sorry they should be obliged to disclaim in the public papers any character that thou mightst seem to fix upon them.”

Not only was this promised, as a matter of course, and an arrangement made for an interview at the Quarry Wood farm, when all the terms might be discussed; but Mrs. Lambert obtained permission to call upon the crying housekeeper, and the gaping foot-boy, for aid towards securing the pretty garden from the intrusion of pigs and other trespassers. Before sunset, the gate swung once more on its hinges; and the grass was rolled and rolled again till half its disasters were repaired. It was as much a labour of love as teaching in a school, or cooking broth for a sick neighbour; and when Mrs. Lambert found she must go home, the foot-boy ran before her to open the gate; the housekeeper blessed her; and even Mr. M. sent a message after her to beg that she would not go till she had rested herself.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter IV.

HERESY.

Peterson was not long in performing his promise or threat of visiting B.'s cottage. Indeed, he had so much to do now that it was necessary to fulfil his engagements as they arose, if he meant to discharge them all. He was not only the lessee of the vicar's tithes, which cost him no small trouble to gather in. He was also the collector of Sir William Hood's; and the time approached for making the usual valuation of the crops before harvest. Some of the land was, as has been said, tithe-free. A small portion besides, which seemed to lie within the verge of the parish, caused him no trouble. It had never been included, with certainty, within the bounds of any parish; and the tithe thereof, being extra-parochial, was the prerogative of the king, with whom Peterson had nothing to do. A composition had been agreed upon for the tithes of other lands, for a certain number of years; but there still remained a large extent of ground on which the great tithes had either to be compounded for on a valuation, from year to year, or where the contribution to the parson was to be levied in kind. His own property by lease, the small tithes and hay which he rented from the vicar, he determined to levy in kind: and his first step was to study the precise extent to which they were due, and to levy them to the utmost. Of the prædial tithes,—those which arise merely and immediately from the ground, the grain and wood had to be valued in order to a composition. The hay, being the vicar's by special endowment, had to be levied in kind with the other prædial tithes which came under the denomination of small tithes; viz.: fruit, vegetables, and herbs. He had not only been the round of the hayfields, but was looking into all the gardens, and casting a calculating glance over the orchards, in anticipation of a tenth of their produce. Then the mixed tithes gave him much trouble; tithes of produce which arises not immediately from the ground, but from things immediately nourished by the ground, and which, according to the murmuring parishioners, paid tithe twice or three times over. When they had paid tithe of grass, they contended, it was hard to have it to pay again in the shape of a calf, and again in that of milk. In like manner, the grain on which their poultry fed paid tithe; and then the poultry; and also eggs. In like manner, the sheep pasture paid tithe; and then the tenth lamb must be given; and lastly, the wool. Endless disputes arose out of the lessee's claims, and he was perpetually sent to his tithe gospel, as he called his law-book. There he found a provision by which he might annoy Byrne, and every parishioner in Byrne's rank of life. There was another kind of tithe, besides the prædial and the mixed;—the personal tithe, which might be made, if possible, more offensive than the mixed. He knew that by a claim for this kind of tithe, at least, he could punish Byrne for his partisanship with Mr. Mackintosh in the morning.

When he arrived at Byrne's, both the labourer and his wife were occupied in helping Alice to feed her little birds, the twelve young partridges which bore testimony to the efficacy of flannel and fire in June. Byrne did not trouble himself to look up when his foe entered; but observed, while guiding an infant beak to the mess which was prepared, that Peterson need not flatter himself that he would be permitted to carry

away any of Miss Alice's birds. The little girl's own father should not rob her of her pleasures. Peterson thought it a pity such a defiance should be wasted; but he really never thought of such a thing as tithing wild birds. Pheasants and partridges are decided by law to be *feræ naturæ*, and therefore not titheable. Though their wings be clipped, they would still fly away if they could; and if they should breed, their young, though imprisoned, are still wild, and therefore not bound to support the clergyman. Alice's pleasures were safe.

"O, I am so glad!" cried Alice; "and now we need not be afraid about the bees either, I suppose."

"Ay; your bees, Mrs. Byrne," observed Peterson, smiling. "You need not twitch the young lady's sleeve, Byrne; I thought of the bees before; and, in fact, they made part of my errand. I see you have a fine range of beehives at the south end of your garden; and that spreading jessamine, and the thyme bed, and the tall honeysuckle must yield plenty of wax and honey. You must keep my share for me, remember."

"If partridges are wild, so are bees, I should think, Mr. Peterson."

"So the law says: and I am of opinion the law is therein defective: since, though bees can fly away individually, they are stationary, as a swarm, when once fixed in a hive. I should recommend that every tenth swarm should be set apart for tithe: but the law does not so ordain. The wax and honey, however, do not fly away, and it is of them that I spoke when I said you must remember the vicar's share."

"The vicar would have been sure enough of his share," said Mrs. Byrne, somewhat heated, "if you had let me alone to offer it. Miss Alice will tell you that every year she has had much more than a tenth of my honey; and so she would still, without your interfering to make that a debt which was much more precious as a grace."

"Mr. Peterson shall not bring me my honey," protested Alice. "I won't take it, unless you let me carry it home myself, Jane."

Peterson wondered what would become of religion, if it was to be left to be supported by free will, instead of by dues.

How little was he aware what was included in this question! How little was he aware with whom he identified himself while asking it! This has been the faithless question of all the perverters of the quenchless religious principle in man, from the beginning of time,—of all the priests of all the trinities that the world has known. This is the question asked by the wise man of the Egyptian temple, when he unveiled the hawk-headed Osiris, and the swaddled Orus, and the crocodile-shaped Typhon, and told the prostrate people what to pay for housing the triad of creators that they came to adore.—This is the question asked by the ancient Hindoo priest, when he finished his evening meal of rice in the echoing recesses of the rocky temple, and waited only for the departure of the last impoverished worshipper, to go and see how much wealth was deposited for Brahma, and how much for Vishnu, and how much for Siva, and how many bribes were offered for admission into each of the seven paradises of the

seven seas. This is the question asked before the Greek altars, when goats and horses and black bulls were sacrificed there, to the gods of the earth, and the sea, and the infernal regions, and tithe was demanded to be yielded to the one on his ivory seat, and another in his car of sea-shell, and the third on his throne of sulphur. This is the question asked by the skin-clothed ministers of the Gothic deities, Odin, Vile, and Ve, when they called upon their barbarian brethren to offer the hides of wolves, and the flesh of boars, in homage to the three sons of the mysterious cow. This is the question asked by the Mexican priests of old, when they forbade the feathered and jewelled warrior companies to come empty-handed to the sanctuary of the father-sun, the brother-sun, and the son-sun; the trinity of unpronounceable names. This is the question asked by the monastic orders of the Catholic church, when they ordained, as penance, that the children's inheritance should be made over to the church, to the glory of the Gnostic triad which they enthroned on the Seven Hills, and to which they dared to invite adoration in the name of Christ. This is the question now asked by our Episcopal preachers of the three-fold deity, the Avenger, the Propitiator, and the Sanctifier; and enforced for the support of their tri-partite form of religion, compounded of Heathenism, Judaism, and Christianity.—This is *not* the question asked by Jesus, when he sent forth the Seventy, bidding them have faith that they should be supported by free-will offerings better than by dues; or when he cleansed the temple from the defilements which but too soon returned to harbour there; or when he sat on the well in Samaria, and declared who it was that the Father sought to worship him; or when he strayed in the wilderness, despising the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and asking instead, the heart of man; or when he sat on the mountain-side, gazing on the temple towers which were bathed in the evening light, and telling of the time when the young pigeons should try their first flight from the summit of Moriah, instead of fluttering in death on the altar of sacrifice; and when the husbandman should plough up the foundations of the sanctuary, finding, through the gospel, that his own heart was a holier place.—What is included in this question,—whether religion can be supported by free will, and not by dues? To ask it is to doubt whether God has vivified the human heart with a principle of faith, and whether man be not really made to grovel with the beasts which perish, or, as the only alternative, to pursue shadows till the grave swallows him up like a pitfall in his path. It is to suppose that by mere accident alone has the northern barbarian been found watching for signs in the driving clouds; and the western Indian looking abroad over the blue Pacific; and the Persian hailing the sunrise from the mountain-top; and the Greek lawgiver waiting upon the voice of the oracle; and the Christian child praying at the knee of its parent. It is to question whether there be more in a sunrise than yellow light, or in a pestilence than so many dead, or in a political revolution than a change of actors in an isolated dramatic scene, or in the advent of a gospel than the issuing of a new and fugitive fiction. It is to deny that every man needs sympathy in his joys, and consolation for his sorrows; that he ever questions whence he came and whither he must go; that he ever feels the weight of his own being too vast to be sustained without reposing on Him who called it forth. It is to question whether there be faith on the earth, except within the pale of two or three churches; whether, for the rest of the world, the sea does not raise its everlasting voice, and the starry host hold on their untiring march in vain. It is to question whether the decrepid can truly worship in the aisles of our churches; or the lordly care for the things of the Spirit, unless those things are joined with worldly pomp. It is to pronounce the apostles

profane in their fishing and tent-making, and foolish in their fully-justified reliance on the faith and charity of their disciples. It is to declare Jesus wrong in saying that to the poor the gospel is preached, and that his kingdom was not of the old world,—belonging to the formal Judaical dispensation. It is to put his gospel for correction into the hands of the prelates who legislate for its security, and who predict its permanence, if it be sustained by the means they prescribe,—by gifts and offerings wrung from the reluctant; by endowments, by bounties of first-fruits and tenths, by tithes and oblations. To question whether religion can be supported by free-will instead of by prescribed dues is to libel man, to doubt the gospel, and to stand with a sceptical spirit amidst the temple of God's works.

Would that the vicar had had sufficient faith in the gospel he preached to believe that it might be supported without exactions which it does not sanction! Would that he had been wiser than his tithe-gatherer, and had foreseen the consequences, as well as been aware of the guilt, of alienating the spirits which it was his express office to win! He looked very grave at his little daughter, when she loudly complained that Peterson wanted to take away some of Jane's honey for him, when she knew he had much rather that Jane should give it him herself. He told her that she must not speak of matters that she did not understand:—a rebuke which astonished Alice more than all the rest, as she thought she had never heard of anything more easy to be understood.

There was little show of respect to the vicar, this evening. When he entered Byrne's cottage, Peterson was traversing the garden, making notes of potatoes, turnips, and cabbages, of onions, parsley, and sage. He counted the currant bushes, and looked up into the cherry-tree. Mrs. Byrne attended, in terror lest there should be a quarrel. She tried to persuade her husband to go and make his bow to the vicar; but Byrne would do no such thing. He dogged the tithe-gatherer's heels, disputing where he could, and threatening where he could not dispute. He did not mean to pay tithe these seven years, for the new bit of garden which he had just taken in. He would contest it to the death. He hoped the turnips would prove tough enough to choke the tithe-gatherer. He would not gather his cherries at all, if he must pay tithe of them. They should be left for the birds, and for any village children who might come to take them.

“That is all very fine talk,” replied Peterson: “but I can tell you this. If your fruit is taken by the birds, or other downright thieves, I must bear the loss with you: but if it be taken with your knowledge and consent, whether by school-children or anybody else, you must pay me the tithe of what was taken: and if left to drop from the tree, I must have the tenth of what so falls. Pray, are these peas and beans for sale, or for domestic use?”

Byrne could not tell till they were gathered; and his wife did not pretend to have made up her mind, any more than he.

“Well; if you won't tell me, I must be on the watch to see whether your hog touches any of them, and how many find their way to other people's tables. And then, you will have no right to call me prying, remember. I asked you the fair question, which you would not answer.”

Byrne thought he might as well live under Bonaparte, or any other tyrant, at once, as be liable to sow and tend and reap for another, in this way; and to be watched by a spy, as if this was not the free country it prided itself on being.

“What would you say if you were a farmer?” cried Peterson, with a smile. “Here you have only to pay a little honey, and a few vegetables, and a little fruit, and—one thing more, for which I find the vicar has strangely omitted to charge you hitherto. See here,” producing his lawbook. “By a constitution of Archbishop Winchelsea, and the statute, 2 and 3 Edward VI., c. 13., tithes are payable for profits arising from personal labour or merchandise. They are payable, you see, where the party hears divine service, and receives the sacraments; but only the tenth part of the clear gain, after all the charges are deducted. Now I find your wages are per week—”

“Do you dare to want to strip my husband of his wages?” cried Mrs. Byrne. “I will call the vicar to put an end to this.”

Peterson’s triumph was complete. The vicar was full of concern that anybody suffered pain or inconvenience about the matter: but it was not for him or his parishioners to alter the constitution of the church. His duty to his church and to his successor required that the ecclesiastical law should be obeyed in all its provisions. Two or three zealous clergymen had lately revived this claim, after it had lain dormant for very many years, throwing into gaol the labourers who opposed themselves; and he would support them through evil report and good report.

“Then you may throw me into gaol,” cried Byrne. “As for attending your services, neither I nor mine will ever do it more, Mr. Hellyer: and I never wish to see you within my gate again, sir.”

“O, John!” cried the terrified wife.

“I am not going to be angry,” said the vicar to her, with his usual air of quiet complacency. “I have long feared that the infidel who has come among us would corrupt your husband, and I see he has done so completely. Nay: do not cry so, Jane. All our hearts are in the hand of God: and you should trust, as I do, that he will sustain his church under the attacks of the unbelieving.”

“Not if such as you have the management of it,” cried Byrne. “You talk of Mr. Mackintosh: but I tell you that nothing that I ever heard him say turned my heart from you and your religion as you yourself have done to-day; and I rather think that Mr. Mackintosh owes to you much of such power as he has. We shall soon see that. Send the labourers of this parish to gaol for their tithe of wages, break gates, and pry into gardens, and you will see what a congregation Mr. Mackintosh will have on his lawn, to hear what he has to say about a religion that teaches such oppression.—Be pleased to hold your tongue, sir, and walk out of my garden.—Hush, Jane!” he cried to his weeping wife. “There is nothing in their tithe-law that prevents my saying that.—Go, go, and milk the cow.” And he turned over the pail, which still stood with milk in it, as in the morning. He declared that he knew something of tithe-law as well as Peterson, and therefore claimed the liberty of spilling the milk which had not been

removed, after due notice, so as to restore the pail in time for the afternoon milking. Peterson could not deny the correctness of Byrne's law.

"Well; but, why not come to church?" mildly inquired the vicar.

"To hear you thank God that you are no extortioner, I suppose. I am sick enough of that."

"But, John,—do listen, John!—He can't help it: it is no fault of his: he only asks what the law gives him."

"Then let the law leave off making a man contradict in the pulpit on Sunday all he has been doing during the week. 'Tis a hypocrisy that I am sick of, and I'll never enter the church door till there is an end of it. You see the gate, sir. You are welcome to go away as soon as you choose."

There was nothing for the vicar to do but to walk away, however Mrs. Byrne wished to detain him till her husband had cooled. Peterson had found his way over the fence, rather than cross the path of the angry man. Byrne saw this, and shouted after the vicar, loud enough for Peterson to hear,

"You are mightily afraid of a deist, Mr. Hellyer: but if you care for your church, look to your tithe-gatherer."

"Run after your papa, my dear," said Mrs. Byrne to Alice, who was contemplating the spilled milk: "never mind your birds; I will put them under a coop till you come again."

"Papa looks so odd!"

"The more reason you should go. Run after him, and talk about every thing you can think of."

Alice hopped and skipped down the road, while Jane wept as if her heart would break. Her grief could scarcely have been greater if she had known the truth that time revealed,—that from this hour, her husband hated the vicar with an intense hatred.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter V.

EXTORTION.

Before two years were over, the experiment of a close exaction of tithes was considered by good judges to have been fairly tried, and to have produced consequences as apparent as could be expected to arise in any given case.

First. There were three law-suits.—The vicar was plaintiff in a cause where his late friend, Sir William Hood, was defendant. He claimed tithes for the produce of a portion of the Abbey Farm; (or suffered under the imputation of doing so, from still keeping the secret of having let his rights to Peterson.)

The Lamberts were not a little astonished at such a claim being made on their tithe-free farm: but the vicar alleged that the exemption ceased when the land was turned to other uses than those which prevailed when the exemption was granted. The prescription was at an end, he contended, when, as in this case, land which was in a state of tillage when exempted was converted into pasture land. Much trouble was given to the Lamberts, at the same time, by their being called upon to show the requisites for the exemptions which had never been disputed;—that the lands they held had been really abbey lands, and that they had been immemorially discharged of tithes. Another suit was instituted against Mr. Parker, to set aside a modus with which all parties had hitherto been pretty well satisfied. By this modus,—or composition whereby the layman is discharged from rendering his tithes, on his paying in lieu thereof of what immemorial custom, or the custom of the place, directs,—Mr. Parker paid fourteen pounds for produce which, paid in kind, would have yielded twenty. He had often thought himself unlucky in his bargain in comparison with some who had a good bargain of their modus, paying two-pence an acre, as their ancestors had done; or a fowl instead of the year's tithe of eggs: but he had little expected that the vicar would lodge a complaint in a court of law of the modus being too large. It accorded with six out of seven of the rules which constitute a good and sufficient modus; but it violated one. It was certain and invariable: it benefited the tithe-taker only: it was different from the thing compounded for: it did not discharge from the payment of any other species of tithe: it was, in its nature, as durable as the tithes discharged by it: and it was immemorial without interruption; that is, it had existed from the beginning of the reign of Richard the First, which is the period fixed by the law as “the time of memory.”

All this was indisputable; but the seventh condition was, that the modus should not be too large;—that it should not be a rank modus. If Mr. Parker had been paying four shillings, instead of fourteen pounds, the modus might have been held a good one; but this was so doubtful as to be supposed worth contesting, according to the decision, “the doctrine of rankness in a modus is a question of fact to be submitted to a jury, unless the grossness is obvious.”

The third suit was of more consequence than either of the other two. It had always been believed in the parish that the glebe land, which was now annexed to the vicarage, had been once upon a time offered and accepted as a substitute for the lesser tithes of a farm at present occupied by one of the most respectable of the parishioners. Now, however, for the first time, Mr. Pratt was called upon, either to show evidence of such a bargain having taken place under all due formality of circumstance, or to pay full tithe. Mr. Pratt was indignant when he ceased to be astonished, and refused to pay the tithe unless he had the glebe land back again. This was refused; and the law, as of course, was made the arbitrator between the parties.

Every body in the parish who paid a composition, now began to hunt up the evidence of the ordinary having consented to it; of its being old enough; and of its not having run on for a longer term than twenty-one years, or the lives of three parsons.

These proceedings did not improve the influence of the clergyman in the parish. One after another of his flock wandered away to the Friends' Meeting house. There was talk of encouraging the methodists to build a chapel, though an attempt to do so had failed three years before. Subscriptions were withdrawn from the parochial library which the vicar had set up: and in proportion as the law-suits were discussed, did the respect with which he was once regarded change into rudeness. Few heads were uncovered before him. Men turned their backs at his approach, and the women did not look up from their work when the children gave notice that he was passing by. He bore this, as he said, very patiently; praying to God to turn the hearts of the flock once more to true religion and reverence for the church. He declared himself resigned to having fallen on evil days, and could wait till his parishioners should repent of their treatment of him. He heroically adhered to his habits, amidst the change of times; taking his walk past the houses which were chalked with maledictions on him, and over the green where every one put on a solemn look as soon as he came in sight. Alice could never prevail on him to go round by the back lanes, though it was evident that she suffered much pain, if not absolute terror, whenever she was his companion amongst his alienated people.

Those who suffered most, next to the vicar and his daughter, were perhaps the Lamberts. Through the exterior of calmness which they considered it a religious duty to preserve, it might be discerned that their lightness of heart was gone. No lads could well be merrier than Charles and Joseph used to be; and their mother's influence was formerly more frequently exerted in mildly chastening their mirth than in any other way. When they had masqueraded, under pretence of amusing Alice, or from singing a 'ditty' in the farm-house parlour had advanced to some high thoughts about the cultivation of music, she had told tales of the sobriety observed in her young days. Now, her endeavour was to cheer them when they came in dispirited from their farm. She now asked for 'a ditty,' and taught them two or three which their father used to sing to her before they were born. She encouraged Joseph to use his pretty talent for drawing, and was always ready to be read to when Charles seemed disposed to take up his book in the evenings. It was the least she could do, she thought, to keep up their spirits as well as her own, since she had sanctioned their taking the Quarry Wood farm, which seemed likely to run away with the gains they had made on the Abbey Farm; and with more besides, if this season should turn out one of as great scarcity as

was apprehended. It was the least a mother could do, while discouraging Charles from marrying Henrietta Gregg till his prospects should clear, to make his home as little irksome as possible, and occupy his thoughts with other things besides his love and his disappointments. Some people thought (and they declared the vicar to be on their side) that the ill success of the Lamberts on the Quarry Wood farm was no more than might have been expected from their having any thing to do with such an infidel as Mr. Mackintosh; and they had little pity, in some quarters, for their failure: but they thought the whole might be sufficiently accounted for without supposing that a special judgment had overtaken them. Thus much, at least, was true: that no disasters had befallen them in their management of the abbey farm, though Mr. Mackintosh was their landlord; and that the Quarry Wood farm might have been made to answer if it had been tithe-free. The natural conclusion was that the tithes of the church were to blame, and not the infidelity of Mr. Mackintosh.

The rent of the Quarry Wood farm was low; and this had been the chief temptation to the Lamberts to take it. They were aware that it required much improvement, and were prepared to lay out a good deal of capital upon it. The composition for tithe which had been formerly paid was very moderate, and every body had supposed that it would, as a matter of course, be continued. But the new tenants had not been in possession half a year, before Peterson found means to set aside the composition, and gave notice that he should demand tithe in kind. They hoped that, at least, their improvements would remain exempt for seven years, according to the statute:—a vain hope; as it was proved that the land, though long left in wild condition, was not what the law would call barren. The tithe seized the first year swallowed up so much of the returns as to leave by far too little to pay for the enclosures. There was, indeed, so much capital thus locked up that the young men declared they should have let the land alone if they had known how they were to be taken in about the tithes. The same was the case with an extent of wood land which they had stubbed and grubbed, and made fit for the plough. As it had borne wood, it was not ‘barren’ land, and it came under the tax. Of course, the improvements were put a stop to presently, amidst many regrets that the money had not been employed on some far inferior land on the tithe-free farm. It had better have lain idle in their iron chest than have been thus expended to a loss. If they had known more than they did of the history of tithes, they would have been better aware of the policy of idleness under such a system;—that idleness, both of labour and capital, on which tithes offer a direct premium. They would have known that the cultivation of flax and hemp in Ireland was suspended till a low modus was fixed by law, under which it has flourished ever since. They would have known that the production of madder was long confined to the United Provinces, which, being Presbyterian, offered no ecclesiastical tax on its cultivation; and that its growth in England began from the time when, by a special provision, 5s. per acre were to be taken in lieu of tithe of madder. They would have known that the reason why Edward VI. exempted barren land from tithe for seven years was, because, without this provision, the land would never have yielded at all, either to the public or to the church. They would have known how tremendous is the waste, to the public, to the farmer, to the landlord, and eventually to the church, by a method of taxation which causes worse land to be cultivated while the better lies waste—by a method of taxation which reaches land untouched by rent, and which, by absorbing a larger and a larger share of profits which are perpetually decreasing, raises prices to a degree quite

inconsistent with the prosperity of all the parties concerned. If the Lamberts had duly studied the tithe question, they would have foreseen the disasters which must arise, instead of being taught by bitter experience. Their case was just this;—and it is a fair specimen of what is taking place wherever the tithe system is adopted.

The best land on their two farms yielded an equal produce. As the Quarry Wood land paid tithe, they would have been obliged to raise the price of their corn so high as to cover the cost of the impropiator's share, as well as the expences of cultivation, if this had not been already done by the body of tithe-paying corn growers. Corn was already dearer in the market, by the parson's share, than it would have been if the parsons had had no share. The produce of the abbey farm brought in a larger profit through this elevation of prices; but this circumstance had been considered in fixing the rent; and the surplus profit went, not to the Lamberts, but to their landlord, in the shape of higher rent. Thus far, they neither lost nor gained. The consumers of corn lost, and Mr. Mackintosh gained. The same took place on a few inferior kinds of land. But there was soil which would have paid profits of stock as well as rent, if there had been no tithe, but which should have been left uncultivated (because tithe would swallow up the profits) if the Lamberts had been aware of the claim which would be advanced by the parson. On this soil their labour was lost: landlord and parson being paid, nothing remained for them. This land, therefore, was to be let out of cultivation; and the capital and labour employed upon it were transferred to an inferior kind of land on the tithe-free farm, which required a much larger expenditure to produce an equal return. In this case, the Lamberts lost by their unprofitable expenditure of labour and capital; and nobody gained. A yet lower quality of soil was next taken into cultivation, requiring a yet larger proportionate outlay of capital and labour, and yielding a sufficient return to the cultivator only because it was exempt from rent as well as tithe. The rise of price, caused by the relinquishment of the better land for the sake of cultivating the worse, was injurious to all the three parties, and particularly to those—viz., the Lamberts—who had to pay the most wages. It would have answered incalculably better to have paid over to the church the capital which was arbitrarily buried in the lower soils, than that portion of produce which caused it to be so buried. Rent would have been equalised between the two estates; prices would have kept their natural elevation; the better soil would have been tilled, and the worst let alone; the parson would have had as much gain and cheaper bread; the landlord would also have had cheaper bread, and a larger rent for the one estate, as well as a smaller for the other; and the Lamberts would not have lost on the one hand by being deprived of their profits, and on the other by the rise of wages. The only persons anywhere who had ground for unmixed rejoicing in this state of things were the landlords of none but tithe-free estates. By the rise of rent, they gained, and they alone: and their gain was by no means in proportion to the collective loss of the other parties. But it was a curious fact that, while the church was complained of (and justly) on all hands, for the tremendous injury occasioned by its tithe system, the benefits of it went into the pockets of landowners amidst the hills and dales of Scotland, where a commutation long ago placed them beyond the hazards of the desperate game; and of all who could take their stand on abbey lands, or on some lucky ancient modus, or equally happy modern composition.

From the circumstances of the case, the Lamberts suffered all the injustice which must accrue upon the first institution of this most pernicious tax. When it has been long enough paid to become calculable, it is allowed for in the rent, and falls next, like other land taxes, on the landowner—the person most able, from the perpetual tendency of rent to rise, to bear the burden. But it is not long a burden to him, except as a consumer; for, as it operates in increasing the expense of cultivation, it raises prices; and the consumer ultimately pays. The hardship of a new institution, or, as in this case, of a revival of tithe, is very great upon the tenant, and is a sufficient exponent of the pernicious nature of the impost. The lease of the Quarry Wood farm had not many years to run; but the experience of the first two years, and the opening of the third, left the prospect of the young farmers anything but bright. The present spring had been most unfavourable to the crops. The doubt was whether so much rain was not rotting the vegetation in the ground. The view from the summer-house was dreary,—of sodden fields, and lanes lying under water. The very wall-flowers languished for want of sun, Mrs. Lambert found when she one day climbed the hill: but they did not droop like her poor son Charles, whom she found there, looking out of the window, with his head leaning on his hand, and listening to the patter of rain-drops which again began to fall, and to drop from the broad thatch into the little dell over which the summer-house projected. It was a dispiriting thing to wander over the lands of Quarry Wood farm, and see enclosures deserted when half finished, and fields from which golden harvests had been anticipated, grown over with briars and thistles. It was in such a place that Mrs. Lambert met Joseph, one April afternoon, when the twilight was settling down.

“What hast thou got there, mother?” said he: “A heavy load for thee to carry.”

“Not so heavy as large. These stringy, branchy roots make a fine blaze to drink tea by; and I thought it a pity this one should lie and rot yonder. But thou hast thy hands full, seemingly. Where art thou taking that poor thing to?”

It was a ewe, very near its time of yeaning. Joseph explained that Peterson’s eagerness about where the ewes couched and fed had put into his brother’s head and his own a device which it was very well to have thought of. In the next parish, tithes were only half the amount that they were in this; and Charles and he had prepared the bit of land they had in that parish for their ewes. The animals were now being transferred thither, gradually and quietly, lest Peterson should set up a plea of fraudulent removal. The lambs would remain there till the tithing was over: and it was much to be wished that there was room for all their flocks till shearing time should have also passed.

“But I am afraid we must go a long circuit, before we can get to the ground,” continued he. “This field is too deep in wet for the poor thing to cross. ’Tis like a ditch, from end to end.”

“I should not have thought there had been rain enough of late to soak the meadow in this way,” observed the widow.

“Except by filling the drains,” replied Joseph. “They are choaked up, too, from our having left the whole concern hereabouts to itself, this year. But how in the world am

I to get this animal over? She will make herself heard with her bleating after the flock.”

“These are strange times, surely, Joseph, when a ewe may not bleat her own bleat, and when a son of mine skulks under a hedge on his own farm.”

“And the cause is full as strange, mother,—fear of man. I little thought to fear men; but there are two that I would go a mile round to avoid.”

“And they would say it is because thou art trying to cheat them;—in the very act of carrying thy ewes to yeon out of their dominions.”

“Let them say so. It is not such a charge that I fear. Disclaiming, as we do, the ordinance of a priesthood altogether, my conscience leaves me free to put my beasts to couch and feed where it is most convenient, without regard to the parson. My fear is that I should hate those men. They injure me, and I cannot resist; and I have lost patience of late. I would rather walk close under my own hedge, and keep my ewe from bleating than speak, even to myself, as I hear some speak of the collector, and of the vicar, who countenances him in his strictness.”

“I sometimes think that if the vicar’s wife were still living, she would be rather uneasy about his terms with his people. She would hardly like his being much from home after dark.”

“So, that has struck thee too, as well as Charles and me. It was only this morning that I was saying to Charles, that perhaps it is a blessing that Alice is too young to have such fancies as she may live to suffer from. I suppose she is in bed and asleep when he goes and comes through that lonely lane at the back of the vicarage, as he visits his brother of an evening. That lane is hardly the place for a man who has so many enemies.”

“I trust thou hast no apprehension of anything worse than a few insults; or at most a beating, to show contempt.”

“Indeed, I thought of something much worse. There is less contempt than hatred of this man. He is so persuaded that he is right in all that he does that it is impossible to despise him as if he defied the inward witness: but he is the more hated as people see no end to their troubles with him. If I am not mistaken, there are some in the parish who have diligently inquired his age; and not precisely for the purpose of wishing him many happy birth-days.”

“Is the ewe by thy side?” asked Mrs. Lambert, in a low voice, and peering through the gathering twilight; “or was it something else that I heard stirring in this ditch?”

It was not the ewe, but Peterson, who had come, as he said, over a gap in the hedge. In the darkness, it would have been impossible to make out whether he had heard anything of what had been said. Mrs. Lambert therefore asked him.

“Friend, didst thou hear what we were talking about?”

“Tones of voice tell as much as words, mistress: and I wonder at a plain-spoken person like you calling me ‘friend,’ when both you and I know that you hate me like the devil. However, I am going to make you hate me more still, I fancy. Mr. Joseph, you have let this land go to waste in a very sad way; and a field yonder, too. The water stands a foot deep in this meadow; and my children play hide and seek among the whins yonder, where you might have corn growing, if you would.”

Joseph supposed he might do as he pleased with the land till his lease was out.

“But my employer is not to suffer for your neglecting your land. The law makes a distinction between land that is really barren, and that which is needlessly inundated, or overgrown with briars. ‘The field of the slothful,’ you know. My eldest girl got her frock so torn with your briars, that she brought a pretty scolding upon herself, I can tell you.”

“Send her up to me, and I will mend her frock,” requested Mrs. Lambert. “I will give her a new one if thou wilt let my son alone as to whether there shall be briars or anything else in his field.”

“No objection in the world, ma’am, if he pay the due tithe.”

“I’m sure thou art kindly welcome to a tenth of the water in this field, and of the stones in the one above,” observed Joseph. But this offer was declined, and the old composition for these two fields proposed instead.

Before there had been time for the dispute to proceed further, a strange sound from the church tower arrested Peterson’s attention. The bells seemed about to be rung, and Peterson was gone.

What the occasion of rejoicing could be, the Lamberts did not know; nor did they very much care. They had grown listless about good news, and were now most anxious to conclude the business of the evening. As Peterson had crossed the meadow, it must be possible for them and their charge to do so too. The little ridge which stood out of the water was found, and, one by one, several of the teeming ewes were removed and penned into their new inclosures before Joseph went home; and no tormentor appeared.

Joseph told his mother that the labourers who had cut the osiers for hurdles had been questioned whether the article was intended for sale or gift, or for use on the farm. The labourers were glad to be able for once to repulse the tithing man, whom they were weary of having for ever at their heels. There was no small pleasure in seeing the meek animals comfortably provided for on the outskirts of the farm; as if they were as conscious as their owners of the inhospitable character of the parish whose bounds they had crossed. It does not appear that lambs know a tithing-man by instinct; but Joseph put expressions of pity into his farewell for the night which might seem to imply that he felt them to be fellow-sufferers with himself under the rule of the parish tyrant.

After running home in the dark, with sleet pelting in their faces, the mother and son liked the aspect of their house, with its old-fashioned windows lighted from within.

“See what it is not to wear curled hair,” cried Mrs. Lambert, wiping the cold drops from her short, grey locks, combed straight down on her forehead. “If I had had such ringlets as some fine ladies, now, what a figure my sons would have thought me all this evening, with hair as lank as a melancholy queen’s in a tragedy! I call it neat as it is.”

Joseph had not observed his mother’s hair, he was so taken up with examining a letter which had lain among the tea-things on the table. He guessed its contents; and they were indeed such as would have damped a far greater cheerfulness than could arise from the aspect of a warm parlour on a chilly evening. Mrs. Lambert’s only sister, a widow, was dead, and had left five children with a very inadequate provision, if any.

When Charles entered, a short time afterwards, he knew from the first glance at his mother, sitting with crossed hands and a countenance of placid gravity, that something was the matter. Joseph was standing in the chimney corner, gazing into the fire. Charles looked from one to the other. His mother roused herself.

“We are not made to choose our own duties, son,” said she. “I know that it is thy wish to be a husband, Charles; and Joseph and I wish it for thee. But here are thy five cousins left helpless. Their mother is dead; and while I live, they must be my children, as much as you. I must take them into this house, and let them eat at my table.”

“And do you think we will not help you, mother? I will go to-morrow and bring them; and if it shall please God always to disappoint me, I must bear it as well as I can.”

“I hope he will let it be with thee as it has been with me, Charles. All the worst troubles that I have known have been unlooked for; and every thing that I have particularly dreaded has turned out better than I expected. I know that this is a blow to thee, though thou bearest it well at present. I hope that thou wilt not have to wait so long for Henrietta as we now expect.”

“I wish thou wouldst not speak of me, mother, when I know that this death is a matter of great concern to thee. When my aunt was last here, and every one said that she looked more like thy daughter than thy sister, we did not think that we should not see her again.”

The crossing of the hands again, and the slight change of countenance showed that this subject was very painful. Next to her sons, there was no one in the world that Mrs. Lambert loved so much as this sister—many years younger than herself, to whom she had been, in early life, as a mother.

Presently she moved about, much as usual, doing all that she would have done if no bad news had come,—only with somewhat more gravity and silence. She did not forget to put on the dry root to burn; and it blazed and crackled as busily as if it had been ministering to the comfort of the merriest tea-party in the world.

“There are the bells again!” cried Charles. “I thought I had stopped them. I wish thou wouldst go down, and try to stop them, Joseph.”

There was an odd reason for the ringing of these bells. A stranger who had been seen loitering in the parish for a day or two was supposed to be the person who had told the publican that the vicar had received a remonstrance from his ordinary respecting his strictness in the exaction of his tithes; and that it was probable that he might be removed ere long, to give place to some one more acceptable to the parishioners. The publican had made the most of the news; and some of his customers, warmed with his good ale, had sallied forth, and found easy means of setting the bells ringing. Peterson was trying in vain to silence them, when Charles went down to enquire; but Charles had prevailed where the tithe-gatherer had met with only defiance. The bells, however, were now ringing again.

Joseph thought that enough had been done. In a better cause, he would not have regarded the sleet and the north wind that he must encounter in his way to the church; but he now preferred sitting in the chimney corner, hearing the merry peal by fits, as the gust rattled at the window and passed on. Besides, his mother wanted him to help to lay plans for these orphan children.

When the Lamberts had been more prosperous than they were now, they had planned an enlargement of their house, which was scarcely large enough for themselves, and would have required an addition on Charles’s marriage, if only from respect to Henrietta. It was particularly conveniently placed for receiving an addition of two or three rooms on the south side; and a pretty parlour, with a bay-window, was to have ornamented the dwelling. Prudential considerations had caused the scheme to be given up; but this evening it was revived. Charles produced the plans which his brother had drawn, and which he had hoped would next see the light in Henrietta’s service. He suppressed a sigh when his mother’s decided pencil scored out the bay-window; and he roused his best powers of judgment to discuss the necessary questions of convenience and economy.—There was some good brick clay in one corner of the farm, and timber enough for their purpose; and the young men thought that, by dint of their working like labourers, and their mother’s superintending during their unavoidable absence, the enlargement of their dwelling might be effected without any very ruinous expense. The brick making was to be set about immediately, if the weather should but prove fine enough. Bricks were very dear this wet season; and the supply now wanted must be made at home, if possible.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VI.

COMMUTATION.

The bells, or the rumours of them, made themselves heard beyond the parish. The vicar was little moved by them; but uncle Jerom was seen by Alice, the next morning, approaching in a state of sad perturbation. As he could not prevail upon his brother to modify his system through a consideration for his personal safety and dignity, he now tried a different kind of appeal. He asked whether it was not a deplorable scandal to the church that there should be bell-ringing at the prospect of a clergyman being taken from his flock.

“It was less that than the belief that I had been rebuked by my superior which caused the exultation,” quietly replied the vicar. “But you know that neither the one nor the other is true. I will not, by yielding my own claims, give occasion for the supposition that my superior yields those of the church.”

“But if you allow proprietors to buy up the tithes on their own lands,—Parker for instance,—you will cease to have such for enemies; and it will be a very different thing from selling the dues of the church to an intermediate layman.”

“Ah! Jerom, there you touch my conscience in the only tender part. I have long repented letting my tithes to Peterson, as you recommended. It was bad advice, Jerom, as is all advice to rate at an average a revenue for sacred objects, of which revenue it is the primary quality that, as God’s seasons vary, it must vary. Jerom, your’s was bad advice.”

“Indeed it seems to have been so, by the aggravation of your troubles since Peterson became your lessee. But I find from him that Sir William Hood is about to allow the great tithes to be bought up, in order to put a stop to the deterioration of husbandry in the parish; and I really think you could not do a better thing than follow his example when so good an opportunity offers.”

The vicar spread both hands before his brother, in emphatic refusal.

“Papa,” said Alice, “I wish you would do as you are bid, sometimes, as you are always telling me to do. Why don’t you mind what uncle Jerom says, and what every body says? Well, it may not be every body’s business; but I know what Jane says; and I am sure she is as fond of you as any body can be.”

The being fond of him argued such a right mind towards the church, that the vicar was immediately prepared to hear what Mrs. Byrne had to say.

“She says that she is frightened to hear how people talk; and that she shall never be easy to see you out walking till you have somehow put other people into your place about collecting the tithes. If there must be tithes, so that Mr. Parker must always look

out of humour, and the Lamberts grow sad, and Mr. Byrne give up more and more things in his garden, the blame ought to go where it is due, she says; and that is to the church, and not to you. And it would be so, she thinks, if people all bought their own, and there was an end of the quarrelling that there is now, twice a year.”

“I wonder who suggested the idea to her,” observed the vicar. “If I thought it was Mr. Mackintosh—”

“I think it was not Mr. Mackintosh, papa. I think it was the man that—”

“I know whom you mean,” said Jerom; “the stranger who has been hanging about the parish lately,—no one can tell why. Some of my people suspect that he is an agent in the rickburning plot. I am sorry that Byrne lets him within his doors.”

“And so is Jane, I think,” said Alice. “She always tries to prevent my seeing him, if he happens to be in the cottage; and once I observed her cry the moment she saw her husband bringing him up the road. Perhaps he will go away, papa, if you will do as they wish you should.”

This was not the very best kind of appeal that Alice could have used. He yielded so far, however, as to allow his brother to bring him word how the bargains for the great tithes between Peterson and the payers were framed, and what effect they appeared to produce on the minds and manners of the discontented. He would determine accordingly as to revising his scruples, or dismissing the matter entirely from his thoughts.

Of course, those who were visited by Mr. Peterson and his companion varied in their eagerness to buy up their tithes, in proportion to the duration of their interest in the land. A farmer who had just entered upon a long lease offered a twenty years’ purchase at 7*l.* per acre, all round,—arable and pasture. Others who were near the end of their lease, and were discouraged by the unfavourable aspect of the season, desired to buy up their tithes year by year, if they could but be secure against competition. Mr. Parker was willing to make a liberal thirty years’ purchase, in order to free his own estate, and leave himself at liberty to improve it without discouragement, or bequeath it to his son without disadvantage. The sum demanded from him, as a hop-grower, was, however, so enormous, that he declared he would rather give up growing hops, as others had done before him, than pay such a merciless impost. Peterson asked him what he would have; and showed him that other people’s hop-grounds had yielded at the rate of 3*l.* per acre. Mr. Parker wished to proceed upon the basis of an average of the last five or seven years; but this was declared to be the most fallacious of guides. Peterson contended that the seasons had been peculiarly unfavourable, and that the modes of management had so varied within six years as to leave no reasonable average. He proposed to value the land and the tithe, deducting the poor-rate and a per centage for the owner’s trouble in stacking, thatching, and threshing his farm produce, and carrying his hops to market. He considered it very liberal to offer a further reduction of 20 per cent. in consideration of the security of the impropiator from the accidents of chance and change: but Mr. Parker hesitated and grumbled, and treated Peterson’s companion with nearly as fine a lament over the assimilating

qualities of the church as Mr. Mackintosh himself could have offered. He related that he had a pretty farm near town which had never before been let by him for less than 5*l.* per acre. It was with difficulty that he could now get 3*l.*, on account of the enormous tithe. It was bad enough to have the poor's-rate as high as 13*s.* per acre, and the sewer's-rate perhaps 7*s.* or 8*s.* more; but the amount of tithe paid in addition was intolerable. The three rates together amounted to nearly 3*l.* per acre over the whole farm. He hoped Mr. Hellyer thought he contributed his share towards promoting the piety of the nation, when his land thus paid 3*l.* per acre to maintaining a single clergyman.

Peterson wished to know in what proportion the different kinds of produce yielded. Mr. Parker was remarkable for a good memory as to the several amounts of tithe.

Wheat paid	20 <i>s.</i> per acre.
Barley and oats	16 <i>s.</i> per acre.
Clover	24 <i>s.</i> per acre.
Tares	16 <i>s.</i> per acre.
First crop of potatoes	25 <i>s.</i> per acre.
After which (on the same land) turnips	16 <i>s.</i> per acre.
Second crop of potatoes	20 <i>s.</i> per acre.
Hay	8 <i>s.</i> per acre.
Onions	40 <i>s.</i> per acre.
Collards	16 <i>s.</i> per acre.
A sow	10 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i>
A cow	15 <i>s.</i>

And garden and farm-yard poultry according to circumstances. A certain amount was to be paid for all small tithes, whether the tenant produced the titheable articles or not.

“There are plenty of men like you,” observed Mr. Parker to Peterson, “who talk of an average of a few years on each separate estate,—five or seven years,—and would have any commutation that is proposed proceed upon such an average. Now, here is a case which shows you the injustice of such a principle. My interest in my land would be almost annihilated if I allowed it to be calculated to yield 2*l.* per acre to the church. To perpetuate such a charge as this would be to ruin the owners of land near London, and in many other situations. They say the price of produce would rise accordingly; but before it could rise enough to repay me for such a sacrifice, the people would be boiling acorns and stewing nettles for food.”

“And it would ruin the church in some other districts,—” Jerom was going on to say; but Mr. Parker interrupted him with,—

“Not so completely as the present plan, sir. The worst enemy of the church,—Mr. Mackintosh himself,—could not desire more than to see the church consuming the state, as it is doing now. As for men that we think wiser than Mr. Mackintosh, they are of opinion that religion was given us to bless our bread, to prosper us in basket and store, and not to devour our plenty. The people cannot but see that the reverse is

the case with the established religion of this country;—that in plentiful seasons, the clergy take much, (legally, I allow,)—and that in bad seasons they take more, (legally, and therefore the more gallingly.) The people cannot but feel that as the net produce of the nation grows smaller in proportion to the gross, and as the clergy seize a larger proportion of the net produce, the question must come to this,—whether the people shall have state-priests or bread. How the clergy are likely to fare in such an alternative, I leave it to you to guess.”

“So, you allow that this is a question pertaining to the people. You allow that the landlord does not alone support the church.”

“Look at the owners of tithe-free lands, and see the folly of such a question. They are getting rich under the operation of our precious system of inequality. And how? Not merely because their farms are in an universally better condition than the tithed: not only because the abbey farm is better worth 20s. per acre rent than the Quarry Wood farm is worth 13s., for the reason that the one does not pay tithe and the other does,—and so on, through all farms that bear this distinction; but because these landowners are profiting by the high prices of produce which must cover the sacrifice of the tithe-payer. No, no: landowner as I am, I never was heard to say that the landlord pays the tithe, in a general way, any more than the farmer. They both have their grievances, and their occasional losses under the system;—they are vexed from month to month, and eat dear bread and meat in their own families, and pay high wages to their labourers; but these sacrifices are made by them in their character of consumers; and it is the people who pay the tithes; the poor Stockport weaver in his garret, and the half-starved apple-vender in her cellar, as truly as the Lamberts and myself.”

“You would sweep away tithe, at once and for ever, I suppose, in pity to these poor people; and set your vicar and myself to weave in a garret, or sell apples in a cellar.”

“No; it may be left to Mackintosh to preach up such a scheme of spoliation as that. If the clergy alone were concerned, I might be willing,—not that they should weave and sell apples,—but that they should obtain their support, like other servants of society, from the hands of those whom they serve. But tithe property has become so complicated with other property as to be equally sacred with that other property: and I should cry out as vehemently against its abolition (without compensation) as against reducing the interest of the debt. No wise man—no man of honour—can advocate either kind of public robbery.”

“Since there is this complication of tithe with other property, it had better be let alone. You can no more disentangle it than you can pay the debt. You will never achieve a scheme which will satisfy both tithe and land owner.”

“Probably. It would be strange if a perfectly unobjectionable plan could be formed to lead us out of the mischiefs of a pernicious system whose evil influences have been accumulating for centuries. But, if the church and the landowners understand anything of their own state and prospects, they will be anxious for a final settlement of their accounts within a defined and early period. Such a settlement must take place, sooner

or later, since this tax involves the very principle of perpetual growth. Nothing but absolute transformation can prevent it enlarging till it swallows up everything.”

“I am sure my brother and I do not find it so.”

“Because you cannot recover your dues; but the farmer can instruct you here. My father had a favourite little farm of a hundred acres, which was left to him in 1791, and came into my hands in 1812. When he first let it, the rent was 80*l.*, and the tithe 14*l.* 9*s.*; in 1798, the tithe had risen to 17*l.* 12*s.*; in 1805, rent was 95*l.*, tithe 23*l.* 7*s.*; in 1812 the tithe had risen to 29*l.* A farm of mine, which let, a few years ago, for 240*l.*, then paid 30*l.* in tithes. It now lets for 689*l.*, and the tithes are 140*l.*: that is, the tithes are nearer five-fold than the rent three-fold what was paid before. And, in like manner, there must be an increase all over the country, since the same proportion of the gross produce must be paid in tithe, through every increase of the expense of such production. Therefore, above all things, let us know, in rectifying our tithe system, that we really are to have done with it by and by; and when.”

“And how do you propose to reconcile the clergy to the tithe system thus being brought to an end?”

“Those of them who understand their own position see, like other men, the folly of the clergy stickling for tithes. The clergy have only a life-interest in tithes; and the possession of a certain income is the circumstance which is of most consequence to them. Some contend for tithes as if they were the most secure source of income in the world, or as if they were an inheritance for a future generation; but many more would be glad to depend on a fund less precarious, and less odious in the collection.”

“Do you allow nothing for attachment to ancient ecclesiastical institutions?”

“In your simple brother: but there are faithful churchmen, just as much attached as he to ancient ecclesiastical institutions, who have eyes to see the different effects of the tithe systems of Ireland and Scotland, and who reason from them. They see how, in Ireland, the farmer becomes a peasant, and then is hunted out of house and home by the tithe-procter, and then turns on the proctor to maim and murder him; while in Scotland, the farmer carries home his harvest without interruption, and looks with compassion on his English brother. In the first case, appears an aggravated repetition of the abuses of the English system; in the other, the tithes are drawn with comparative harmlessness, whether by the crown, the clergy, or laymen, in the form of a fixed rent. So long ago as Pitt’s time, there were not wanting bishops to approve of the church being supported by a civil fund. It is true, the plan would have been all for the benefit of the clergy, in the very point in which it is most important to obtain relief.”

“In that of the perpetual increase of which you complain?”

“Yes. When the tithe should have been bought up, in the same way that it was intended that the land-tax should be, and the proceeds invested in the funds, the people were not to flatter themselves that they had done with the tax. The income was

to be so adjusted as to admit an increase, from time to time, in proportion to the rise in the price of grain. The bishop who recorded this scheme breathed no syllable about the desecration of the church by this mode of augmenting its funded income: and the objections of his brethren were of a different cast.”

“As different, probably, as mine from my brother’s, when we sit down to talk over the prospects of the church. I have not the least objection, as he will tell you, to an alteration in the source of our incomes, if the change could be innocently brought about; but I never could see how injustice and tyranny, towards one party or the other, are to be avoided. It is tyranny to the landowner to compel the universal and immediate purchase of the tithe; and it is injustice to the clergy to prohibit that natural increase of their revenue which they consider to have been guaranteed to them by the very institution of tithes.”

“Suppose a plan which should contain an alternative by which both these objections should be answered. Suppose a scheme of commutation under which a tithe-rate should be instituted, subject to increase upon a demand for a revaluation of land, from time to time; while an option should be given to the landowner, to be subject to this increase, or to make a twenty or thirty years’ purchase,—that is, a final purchase of the tithe. I think there might be such a plan.”

“And then those who paid the most tithe would be the first to redeem. But how would you set about ascertaining a *tithe-rate*, afraid as you are of taking an average of a few years as a rule?”

“That objection applies only to perpetuating the limited average of an individual estate. If the average is extended over a parish, or over a county, the calculation becomes a much fairer one. I see no other principle to proceed upon than that of taking an average; and the question of fairness lies between taking in a longer period of time and a larger extent of space. I feel that it would be hard upon me to perpetuate the tithe of my farm near town at *2l.* per acre; and though it would be fairer to take for a basis the average of tithe which it has paid for fifty years, a better plan still would be to find out the proportion of tithe to yearly value of land all through the county, and to fix the tithe-rate according to this proportion.”

“You could never get such a valuation made fairly. When you meet with a *modus*, what are you to do with it? And how are you to settle what is arable land and what pasture? And every farmer will protest against some kinds of produce that are particularly profitable being no more taxed than others. There would be complaints of you,—a hop-grower,—being let off as easily as a grower of corn.”

“All these matters of detail might be settled when once the general principle is agreed upon. If hop-grounds now pay considerably more, from the nature of their produce, than other lands, let them be subject to a fair extra charge. Let a term be fixed,—five years, perhaps,—within which the tillage of lands shall cause those lands to be called arable. And what is easier than to deduct any *modus* from the tithe-rate? Give us the principle of a good scheme, and its application will not be long delayed by difficulties about these minor matters of detail.”

“Your plan would be to have an ascertainment of the annual value of the land, and of the tithe, upon an average of a few years. You would settle their relative value, and declare it in the form of a poundage upon rent for the county. You would allow a periodical revaluation on the application of the tithe-owner—”

“Or of the landowner.”

“Of either party, of course. So the tithe remains liable to increase or decrease—”

“It would be increase. The nature of the tax insures its perpetual increase. But the bad effects of this increase would be guarded against by obliging the tithe-taker to accept from the tithe-payer a twenty-five years’ purchase of the tithes, as a final redemption of his land from tithes. If this tax be really the grievance it is declared to be, the permission to redeem will be made ample use of. And the church—”

“Ah! how do you propose to reconcile the church to the extinction of tithes?”

“To the perpetuation, I suppose you mean. If you should happen to live a few years longer under the present system, you might chance to be taught a little more correctly what extinction is. If you now find it impossible to collect all that is due to you, you may have no chance of collecting any thing twenty-five years hence. The church may be very thankful to have its present amount of revenue secured to it, and to be allowed the opportunity of making a permanent property of it. My great doubt is—”

“Under what agency the commutation is to be effected so as to satisfy the parties. Who will undertake it?”

“Agents so various as to secure impartiality. Royal Commissioners, perhaps, might make the original valuation: and they might be followed by arbitrators who should settle disputes. Then the mechanical part of the business,—the ascertainment of the tithe-rate,—might be done by the justices. The business which most nearly concerns the church,—the final bargain with the landowner, and the investment of the purchase-money either in land for glebe, in the funds, or in mortgages, might be managed by a corporation of churchmen.”

“But how many landowners who may wish to redeem will be ready with the cash?”

“Why must the church be paid in cash? A mortgage on the land to be redeemed, with, a good rate of interest,—say 4 per cent.,—would suit the convenience of all parties. A small per centage on the tithe-rate collected would defray all expences.—I do not see how any difficulties which can attend a scheme like this can be shown to bear any comparison with the evils daily endured under the present system. The doubt I spoke of is whether the great body of the people would not complain of the church being too well treated, its chances of existence being too favourably computed, under such a scheme as I have given you an outline of. I, for one, should say so, if I supposed that the church must either retain its present form or perish. But, believing that there is an alternative, I am willing to do my part in such a compromise as I have proposed.”

“What kind of an alternative?”

“The transformation of the church, so that it may fulfil the original purposes of its establishment. When the church was established for the promotion of religion, religion was the only kind of education which could be given to the people. The time is come when not only must the church be made an educational institution, in order to fulfil its original design, but the religion which it professes to protect cannot be supported without the aid of education. If it could be, it would be superstition, and not religion.—Yes, the days of the present mode of existence of the Church of England are numbered. Religion flourishes so much more eminently, so much more extensively when supported by the free-will of the worshippers, and has been so indisputably proved incapable of an incorrupt union with the state, as to leave no doubt that the Church of England, already a very minute sect among the worshippers of christendom, will soon become too insignificant and weak to maintain its place, unless it quits the ground of its present monstrous assumption, and takes its stand on the cultivated reason of its supporters. I do not know why you,—a clergyman as you are,—should look surprised at what is far from surprising to those who are not clergymen. Look at the map of christendom, and see what space is occupied by our church. Look at Great Britain alone, and mark what proportion the dissenters bear to the church. Observe how many are coming forth from her,—and those the zealous and the dissatisfied, while, from the very nature of the case, the lukewarm and indifferent remain in the bosom of the establishment. Mark the certainty that the worldly and careless will go over to the dissenters from the moment that dissent reaches the point of ascendancy over conformity, and then say whether there be any other alternative than this,—that the Church of England must enlarge its office, and improve its ministrations, or fall.”

“My brother will preach against you for a person as dangerous as Mr. Mackintosh.”

“He will not make Mr. Mackintosh less dangerous, but more so, by preaching against him; and as for me, he might perhaps do more wisely in hearing me than in marking me out to be questioned by those in this parish who do not love the church as they once did.”

“And you would tell those questioners that they must not love their church any more till it is no longer a church, but a school.”

“Till the vices of the institution are exploded,—till the clergy cease to be the organs and tools of the oligarchy, for whose purposes the corrupt system of church patronage is kept up. If the clergy were paid according to their services by those whom they serve, instead of being made the pretext for keeping up an ecclesiastical fund useful for filling the pockets and disposing of the younger sons of the aristocracy, there would be an end of the overgrown wealth of some of our dignitaries, and the disgraceful poverty of too many of our working clergy. There would also be some chance of the clergy ceasing to be below every other class of men in a reputation for moral and political independence.—‘By teaching we learn;’ and there may yet be hope that such of the clergy as shall be qualified to begin imparting the elements of the morals required by an advancing age, may be able to bear the ark of christianity through the troubled waters which they must soon encounter. Such of them as are

unfit for this office will sink, and, while sinking, will cry that the ark has perished. But there will not be many to believe it.”

“God will support his own church.”

“God will support the true faith; and his support must be looked for in the usual mode of manifestation,—in the support of man,—in the recognition by man of what is just and right.”

“Your proposed method of commuting some of the property of the church is to be recognized as just and right, I suppose.”

“I believe it has a pretty good chance of being so, if one great consideration be attended to in time;—a consideration which is at present by far too little regarded. This measure can hardly be called just to the people at large, unless it be followed up by another.”

“Ah! that is the way. Every innovation brings another after it.”

“How else is the race to advance? You yourself believe that the great innovation of christianity brought many others after it; and, you may believe me, these of which we are speaking form part of the sequence. Justice requires that there should be an alteration in our corn-laws, to meet the enlargement of demand that must follow upon the relief of land from the burden of tithe.”

“You do not mean that the clergy now eat more corn than they will eat then?”

“No; but the price of corn is now higher than it will be then. No one knows better than you, as a clergyman, that not above one half of the sums drawn out of their natural channel under the tithe system goes to the clergy. Half of it goes into the pockets of the owners of tithefree land, in the shape of increased rent. This rent would fall; and after it, the price of produce; and the fall of price would be followed by an increased demand; and this demand would be supplied,—not only by increased importation, (the import duties having previously risen with the fall of prices at home,) but by the cultivation of inferior soils, now no longer subjected to the burden of tithe. A quantity of the capital of the nation must thus be buried in inferior soils, and tend to increase rent,—*i. e.* to enrich the landlord, and, once again, the church, at the expense of the people.”

“But the great obstacle to the repeal of the corn-laws at present is the amount of capital which is invested in inferior soils.”

“The very best reason for not tempting or compelling a further investment of the same sort. The whole benefit of the commutation depends upon this. If the import duties be so lowered as to admit of the usual supply from abroad, our people will obtain the desired relief from the change of system. If not, it will matter little to the weaver and the apple-vender, at the end of five years, whether they pay their tax to the clergy, or to the barrenness of the ground. It should not, in this conjuncture, be forgotten that the plea of landlords for maintaining the corn-laws has always been the taxes upon

agricultural production,—and tithes above all the rest. If, when tithes are commuted, the landlords should change their plea, and declare that it was not they who formerly paid tithes, but the public, and that they therefore need the protection of the corn-laws as much as ever, I trust the legislature will perceive that the corn-laws ought not to have been kept up thus long, instead of fancying that they must be maintained yet longer.”

“You are hard to please,” observed Jerom, with a grim smile. “Though a landowner, you are no more fond of corn-laws than of tithes.”

“I grant that you and I should find it difficult to settle which is the worst,—for ourselves, and for the people at large. I only wish I could make you, a clergyman, as discontented with tithes as I, a landowner, am with corn-laws.”

“Some people,” observed Jerom, “complain of tithes as being bad in a deteriorating country; but you have been murmuring at their operation on your father’s improving farm.”

“For the good reason that tithes are injurious in the extreme, in either case. In an improving country, where there is capital ready for application, tithes are bad as discouraging the application of that capital. Witness that pretty field of mine which must lie waste till I can cultivate it without having all my profit swallowed up by the church. In a deteriorating country, the tithe is bad, because it tempts to the cultivation of inferior in preference to superior soils, and raises wages, and augments, both in value and amount, with scarcity. Witness its effects upon the Lamberts,—the poor ground they have sown this year, and the better that they have let alone, and the general air of deterioration caused by the higher price of labour. I am afraid Peterson is plaguing them again about some new claim or another. He left us long ago, and walked that way. He is fond of doing business with them, because, as Quakers, they can offer no resistance. Shall we go and see?”

As was anticipated, Peterson was found worrying the Lamberts. Wherever the axe and mattock were heard, there, as a matter of course, was Peterson; and his quick ear had caught the sound of the chopping of wood while Mr. Parker and Jerom were arguing. The Lamberts’ labourers were busy in making faggots of a good deal of wood which had been cut some time before; and of these faggots Peterson was claiming his share.

“Do look at him!” said Parker. “He is going to measure trees, I do believe, to see if they are of the required twenty years’ growth. He carries his measure about with him, as a surgeon does his lancets.”

“If thou wilt only go and ask any lawyer,” said Joseph, who was much heated, “he will tell thee that thou hast no more right to the tops and lops of our pollard oaks than thou hast to the tenth chamber of any house. With all thy boast of law, thou mightest know that, I think. The loppings are exempted as much as the bodies.”

“We shall see that, friend. Meantime, I shall take leave to measure what I call, in a legal sense, underwood, and you timber. You will please to show me the beeches from which all this wood was cut.”

“Thou mayst try and find them out. But, friend, I give thee notice that it will do thee no good, if thou shouldst chance to find the right tree, and that it is twenty-five inches in the girth. Thou hast apparently forgotten some purposes that wood may be cut for.”

“By no means; but you cannot deny that these ash-poles are for sale to Mr. Parker for his hops, and these faggots for the market.”

Mr. Parker denied that he meant to purchase any ash-poles of the Lamberts; and Joseph declared that the faggots were for use on the farm. Peterson would not believe it, so great as the quantity was. Was he to believe that these half-dozen men, all chopping and binding, as if to supply the parish with fuel, were merely preparing wood for farm purposes?

“Yes: we have to burn bricks; and, in this rainy season, there is no time to be lost. And now, friend Peterson, art thou satisfied?”

“By no means, till I know what the bricks are for. They may be for sale.”

“They are for enlarging our house on the Abbey Farm.”

“Enlarging. Hum. Not repairing. If it had been mere needful reparation, the wood for burning the bricks would not, as you say, have been titheable. But enlarging is a different matter, as my book will show you. You must set out tithe of this billet wood, and these tops and lops.”

“I assure thee, it is not for our pleasure, or for any purpose of vanity, that we are going to enlarge our house. Indeed, the times are not suited to such an intention. We are merely preparing to receive a family of orphans who have no other home to look to.”

Peterson had nothing to do with this. Sir William Hood was not to suffer for there being orphans in the parish.

“Cannot you contrive, now,” asked Mr. Parker, “to tithe these orphans, as well as the wood that is to burn the bricks that are to build them a dwelling? If there happen to be ten of them, I dare say Mrs. Lambert will not grudge one of them to the church.”

Joseph could have made a long and eloquent reply to this; but he was particularly anxious not to detain the tithe-gatherer, lest any accident should lead the conversation round to his precious ewes, so as to put Peterson upon missing them from their accustomed places. He briefly said that he and his brother should, as usual, decline to set out tithe of wood; and if the agent chose to seize it, the proceeding must be at his own risk. He took up a hatchet, and made noise enough to show his troublesome visitor that no more conversation was desired. There was no use in entering with the

Lamberts on the subject of a sale of their tithes, as their principles forbade their admitting the right to levy a tax for the support of religion.

Mr. Mackintosh could not bend his spirit to a compromise. His tithes must be taken by seizure, if at all, so long as he remained at the rectory. Others were more ready to compromise,—particularly those who wished to free land of their own from an interference which made them feel very much as if the land was not their own; but there was so much trouble in settling the averages, in agreeing about the deductions, and determining the proportions according to the longer or shorter term of years for which the purchase was to be made, that, before it was over, all parties began to wish that some principle had been established for general guidance;—that, in a case so peculiar, the negociators could have been assisted and protected by government sanction.

There was no hope of the vicar's becoming such a negociator, when a reduction of 20 per cent. in consideration of contingencies, had once been mentioned as one of the grounds of an agreement. He would never consent to surrender any of the dues of the church,—more especially as a letter from a lawyer this day gave high hopes that the authority of the church was about to be vindicated by the issue of his lawsuits with his parishioners being in his favour. This was an encouragement to his firmness and zeal which he could not disregard.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VII.

DIMISSION.

Two of the law-suits were soon decided. The vicar lost that which related to the Abbey Farm, and gained that which disputed the reality of the composition by which the defendant declared the glebe-land belonging to the vicarage to be held. The defendant firmly believed that the evidence of this composition existed; though, from its never having been disputed before, it had been taken no care of; and to lose the cause and pay the new claim of tithe would, he found, be a less expensive process than recovering the evidence on which his defence must be based. He declared that he should assert to his dying day that the vicar, like many another litigious priest, paid himself twice over, keeping the land and taking the tithe. The parishioners only waited, it was said, for the decision of the third cause, to toll the bell, and give their pastor his second warning of the consequences of making war against his flock.

There were now, however, some peace-makers in the parish,—five little peace-makers, who might be seen on a Sunday, walking hand in hand, all in a row; three of them in sleek brown coats and overshadowing drab beavers, and two in plain white frocks and close straw bonnets. The parties between whom quarrels ran highest were united in showing kindness to these orphans. The new rooms at the farm being yet scarcely begun, many friends of the widow Lambert wished to take in the children till she could comfortably accommodate them. Mrs. Byrne begged hard for one of the boys, if he would not mind sleeping in the little bed that Miss Alice had had good rest in, many a time. It would be an amusement to her husband, who had been much out of spirits of late; and the little gentleman would be a companion for Miss Alice when she came to watch the bees, and do what she liked with the garden. Mrs. Beverly thought that she and her maid could make the two girls happy, by setting them to work upon some extraordinary patchwork, and to play with the baby-house which had been Mrs. Beverly's amusement on birthdays when she was their age; but Mrs. Beverly spoke too late; the girls were already promised to the vicarage.

Well; she and her maid would have liked the girls best; but, since they were engaged, they thought they could manage the two little ones,—the youngest now running alone very prettily. But Mrs. Lambert could not part with them all; and those she kept must be the two little ones, who could sleep in her room. With her they therefore staid; and whenever they had the rare luck of a fine morning, this rainy season, they might be seen, the one trotting at cousin Joseph's heels, in loving company with the dog, and the other riding to the field on cousin Charles's shoulder.

“Mother,” said Charles, on the day of their arrival, when he had succeeded in stopping Rachel's tears,—the tears of the stranger,—by employing her to sew a button upon his gaiter,—“Mother, dost thou not think that people may be too tender-hearted sometimes?”

“Is thy mother too tender-hearted? Then I am afraid thou art too like thy mother, Charles.”

“I should not have been like thee to-day. If it is really right that Rachel and Margaret should go to the vicarage, I am glad that the vicar did not fall in with me on his way here. I should have refused his offer; and, I really think, so wouldst thou, but for the thought how the children would enjoy one another’s company.”

“I do not see what harm can befall them at the vicarage. It is a very sober place. At least, I never heard of any dissipation that was going on there; and the vicar reads the Bible in the family every day. They will not have any gaiety beyond gardening with Alice, and playing with her old doll. Will they?”

Charles was thinking of something quite different from this. He could not have brought himself to accept a favour for these children from one who had conducted himself as the vicar had done.

“Well, now, son, I do not see much reason in that speech of thine. If the vicar has done ill by us, why should we hinder his doing better by somebody else? I am afraid there is a little pride in thy objection. What dost thou think?”

“Perhaps there is some pride; but I do not much value the kindness of one who can be so hard as he has shown himself in many instances. I should be apt to think it flattery.”

“Not in this man. He cannot flatter; and where he has been most wrong, he thinks himself right. Ay; it is a strange delusion; but I think him as sincere as he thinks me,—and thou knowest what reason he has to think that. Dost thou know, I felt glad of the opportunity of letting his people see how well he means, and what kind things he does when he is a Christian; that is, when nothing puts him in mind that he is also a churchman.”

Charles was once again surprised at the deceitfulness of the human heart. He was actually wishing to return evil for evil when he thought he was consulting the dignity, (or other welfare,) of the children. He would take them down himself to the vicarage, and go in to make his acknowledgments on their behalf to the vicar.

No children could be happier than Rachel and Margaret during their stay;—patronised by Alice, stroked on the head by the vicar, kept in no more than due order by Susan, visited by aunt Martha, invited by Mrs. Beverly to make patchwork and play with the babyhouse; smiled at by Miss Fox and all her school when they passed in the lanes; and allowed to gather peas for Mrs. Byrne, when they went to her cottage to see Jonathan. A long-expected day was, however, approaching, which was to throw into shade all other days of delight.

Alice had not yet been permitted by Mr. Mackintosh to make hay on his lawn. Last year, indeed, she had felt herself too old and too proud to ask the favour. Finding herself, from her parentage, shunned by other people in her neighbourhood who were liable for tithes, she had not yet attained her wish of once more handling a rake, and

tedding the sweet-smelling grass. This year, however, there was a prospect,—if the sun would but shine so as to give the grass a chance of being dried. Mr. Piatt, whom her father had conquered at law, was to pay his dues to the vicar direct, and not through Peterson; and Alice persuaded her father to prefer the tenth haycock, to be prepared and carried at his own cost, to the twelfth, delivered at the loft. She and her five little friends could almost make the hay: and O! the anticipations of the day! Rachel and Margaret could never be sufficiently instructed and enlightened as to what they were to do and to expect; and Susan had no rest till she had promised buns and a bottle of cider, to be eaten and drunk upon a haycock. The farmer took them by surprise with his notice at last, and no buns were ready: but Susan promised that the young folks should not die of famine in the hayfield, but that something eatable should follow them at noon. She shrewdly perceived that this would be the more necessary, as the children could eat but a small breakfast. They sat still, and looked calm, as little quakers should: but they had not much appetite.

“How hot the sun is here!” cried Alice, laying her hand on the window-shutter, which had been but too little noticed by the sun this year. “Come and feel, Rachel! That sun will do for hay-making, if any will.” And she stood on tiptoe, peeping over her papa’s shoulder, to see how much tea he had forgotten to drink while absorbed in his book.

She whispered to her companions that they might go and get ready, and that they should not have to wait for her long. Because she whispered, her papa heard her. He looked round him, and particularly at the room door, as if wondering whether that slam was its own: then gulped down his tea, and desired the dear child to go and make herself happy.

“But, papa, you are going with us.”

Impossible! What could the dear child be thinking of? There was an absolute necessity for his clearing up a doubtful point which he had promised uncle Jerom to solve; and he expected letters—

“Ah! about that law-suit that makes everybody so rude to you! I wish you would not have any more of those law-suits. People would like you much better if you would go and make hay. Let this be the very last law-suit, papa.”

She could not wish this more than he did. If his people would only not fail in their duty to the church, he should be the last person in the world to resort to law.

“Well, but do make hay, at any rate, papa.” And before her long string of good reasons was fully drawn out, Rachel and Margaret were standing, side by side, before the vicar, ready to say—

“We wish thou wouldst go.”

The vicar had seldom known Alice so eager and urgent; and if it would really spoil the dear child’s pleasure that he should be absent, he would put off his gown, and put on his coat, and go. It was particularly inconvenient. He thought he must carry his book in his pocket, and read in the shade—

“But thou wilt let us topple thee,” remonstrated Margaret.

This might be determined in the field. He supposed this was Alice’s inducement to press him so earnestly to go. Here his opposition ceased. He remembered how perpetually he was thwarting his daughter’s desire that he should stay at home after dark, and resolved to gratify her much more reasonable wish that he should walk abroad in the morning sunshine. He was ready nearly as soon as she, and only stipulated for being allowed to go whither he pleased, when he had been “toppled” to their full satisfaction.

It was indeed a glorious day,—a day of more genial sunshine than had been seen during the season,—the first day which a kindly shepherd would acknowledge to be warm enough for the washing and shearing of his flock.

“Look, look!” cried Rachel, who had run on before the rest of the party. “What are those cruel people doing to the sheep? I do believe they are going to drown the sheep in the pond! Canst thou not make haste and prevent them?”

Alice looked rather contemptuously on the town-bred child, and was anxious to lead her companions round by another way;—not that any one could enjoy a sheep-washing more than she; but she dreaded that further disputes about tithe, and more hatred to her father might arise out of his being present at the shearing. She need not have hoped to prevail, however. Her father stalked on, unconsciously resuming his official air; and the little girls were too anxious to know what became of the sheep to think of staying behind.

It was a great relief to discover that the sheep came out safe at the other side of the pool; and that the dogs, however much noise they might make, did not eat the poor animals. The men and boys, too, looked merry; and presently Charles was seen giving his baby cousin a ride on a sheep’s back into the water; which feat would hardly have taken place amidst any desperate intentions towards the flock. Margaret next concluded that all this was pure play.

“I am sure cousin Joseph told me that old Sam had no time to play with me, and that nobody had time to play at the farm till afternoon; and there they are,—cousin Joseph, and old Sam, and plenty more, playing with brothers, though they will not with us, Rachel.”

“I don’t think it is any fun to the sheep,” observed Rachel. “They bleat as loud as the dogs bark. But I never saw such large sheep in my life. Look at that big thing, standing dripping on the grass! Didst thou ever see such a fat creature, Margaret?”

“It will be thin enough presently,” said Alice, “when the shearers have cut off all that load of wet wool. Come, now, you have seen all you can see. Let us go over this slope, where we can get as many cowslips as we please, instead of passing all those people.”

The little girls had not, however, seen half as much as they wanted. They wished to make out whether there was any soap in the pool to wash the wool so white; and they

were willing to take the chance of a ride into the water; and desired to persuade their brothers to go on to the hay-field with them. Alice perplexed them with signs that she wished to pass on.

“Thou squintest thy eye,” observed Margaret. “What dost thou mean?”

“Never mind now,” replied Alice, somewhat sharply. “It is too late now. If you had minded me a little more than the sheep, papa would not have thought of anything but going straight on.”

“Art thou afraid of that man? He is not gaylooking,” remarked Rachel. “He would see much better if he would come on this side the hedge, instead of prying.”

Alice now saw the man whom Mrs. Byrne disliked as a companion for her husband, peeping through the hedge, and evidently watching the vicar, while he handled the fleece of one and another of the flock, and looked on more like a proprietor than a spectator. She ran down to tell her father,—she scarcely knew why: but he was then too busy to attend to her.

“Halloo, parson, what are you about?” cried one of the many who had long ago put away all pretence of respect in addressing their clergyman. “There is nothing about them sheep belonging to you.”

“How so, friend? You are going to shear the flock, I see.”

“Ay: but this flock belongs to another parish. They are only brought here to be washed. You will find, for once, that some things are out of your reach.”

The vicar argued the point for some time; could not understand the case; must send Peterson to see into it; had been struck with the non-appearance of his tithe of lambs this season; and should expect the Lamberts to reconsider the matter, and employ somebody to set out the tithe of wool before he should pass that way again in the evening, if they would not do it themselves. He should be firm, as they had found, on other occasions, he could be.

Alice persuaded him to leave the rest of his argument to be finished in the evening, and ventured to tell him, as soon as he began to walk away with her, that she thought, and so did Mrs. Byrne, that the Lamberts had taken that bit of land in the next parish for the very purpose of putting titheable produce out of his reach. If he would ask no more than was asked in the next parish, he would not be altogether cheated of his lambs and his wool in this way. As usual, she was told that she knew nothing about the matter. She was sorry for it. She wished she could do some good. It was much wanted. When she now looked behind her, she saw that many were laughing at the Lamberts' victory, and some sneering at her father; and the renewed shouts and barkings and bleatings seemed to have something of mockery in them.

No one was to be found behind the hedge when Alice would have pointed out the peeper: but the grass of the dry ditch was laid in a way which showed that some one had been stretched at length there. The vicar was not surprised. Bread was so dear,

this year, and wages in consequence so high, that a great many people were out of employment. He had never before seen so many idle people lying about in the fields on dry days, and under sheds in wet weather: and Alice was aware that in no former season had the vicar's alms been so liberally distributed.

"O dear! they have half made the hay, I do believe. See how busy they are!" cried Alice, when her party came in sight of the gay scene where a long row of men and women were tedding the grass; the women with their gowns tucked up, and their arms made bare, and the men uncoated, and frequently resting their rakes against their shoulders to wipe their brows. The usual pastimes of the hayfield were going on. Children were shouting with delight, and rolling one another in the grass, or pretending to make hay with rakes far too unwieldy for their strength; while the bigger girls who were sitting under the shade of the hedge with babies on their knees, looked on enviously, and began to wonder whether their charge would not be very safe sprawling on the ground. Baskets and cans helped to make a show in the corner with the discarded coats, and the dog that sat as guard, perking its head at every noise, and looking fully satisfied with its own importance.

This dog alone seemed to undergo no alteration when the vicar entered the field. The first hay-maker who saw him sent the news along the line, and laughter gave place to instant silence. It came full into every one's recollection that this gentleman would claim a tenth of the fruits of this day's toil. Byrne was only one of many whose wages were tithed. The children got up from among the hay, and stared at him,—each with thumb or finger in its mouth. They had seen a pretty little chicken, or a yellow gosling taken from the rest of the brood, in the vicar's name. The boys stood in greater awe of him than the girls; for some wag had told them that they had better take care how they played when the vicar was abroad, lest he should tithe their marbles. The deputy nurses under the hedge elbowed each other, and laid their heads together to whisper. They were telling how grandfather taught them where to put the eggs they found among the nettles, and never, on any pretence, to count them; and how uncle forbade them ever to tell how many pigs the sow farrowed of; and how it was a shocking thing for a gentleman to pretend to give charity, when all he had to give came, mammy said, out of the labour of people quite as poor as some he gave to.—The party from the vicarage soon saw that there was no fear of the vicar's hay being made for him. There lay the grass, untouched. Moreover, it might be observed that no hay was allowed to remain where the vicar walked. As soon as he approached, the labourers turned a shoulder or back towards him, and whisked away the hay, so as to leave him standing alone. He could not help feeling this, and, as usual, he tried to conciliate by kind words: as usual, he received impertinent answers, and, as usual, comforted himself with the thought that he was suffering for conscience' sake.

In these circumstances, it would not do to let himself be "toppled." Rachel and Margaret were told that they must not expect it. They, therefore, began to look about for rakes, in order to obtain the second best amusement in their power.

"Papa, what shall we do for rakes?" asked Alice. "The last time I made hay, Byrne lent me a rake, and I thought we should certainly find rakes with the hay."

“Dear child, we should have thought of that. It is a negligence of ours; for the fair construction of the law is that the parson, or endowed vicar, should, in making his own hay, provide the instruments necessary for making it. But these people have doubtless rakes to spare, and will lend them.”

He tried whether it was so. He was sure the labourers must have rakes to spare.—They looked at one another, and nobody made answer.—He was sure they would not let Alice be disappointed;—Alice came to make hay.—No one looked up.—That little boy appeared very tired with trailing his long rake; perhaps he would lend it to Alice till he had rested himself.—The child began, at his mother’s bidding, to make hay more diligently than ever.

“See, dear child—” the vicar was beginning to say, when Alice came up to entreat him to ask no more favours. She had far rather not make hay to-day: indeed, she did not wish it.—This was more than Rachel and Margaret could, for their part, aver. There is no saying what aunt Lambert would have thought, if she had seen how nearly they were crying. The vicar perceived it, and, advising them to sit down and rest themselves during his absence, said he was going in search of rakes, and would bring some from the shop, if not from a nearer place, within an hour.

They did not rest themselves so much as a minute and a half. They began showering grass upon one another: but, the very instant that the vicar disappeared from the field, more rakes were offered than they could use. “Papa! Papa!” cried Alice, in hopes of bringing her father back: but one of the women held up her finger in a very forbidding way; and Alice saw that if she was to hope for hay-making, she must leave papa uncalled for. She almost wished now that he would not return.

He did return, however, when the work was far advanced. Upon his own shoulder he brought three rakes, which he offered,—not to the Quaker boys, who had arrived and were eager for them,—but to the labourers or their children who had accommodated Alice and her friends. But they lay disregarded till the Quaker boys were allowed to take them up, because it was clear that no one else would.

The little folks had been offered some of the contents of the baskets and cans; but had declined eating and drinking till they should have made something like a haycock on which to sit and refresh themselves. Just in the right point of time, appeared a messenger from Susan, with a savoury-smelling basket, and two cool-looking green bottles.

“I am sure we may make our cock now,” said Alice. “These people have made some of theirs, you see, before they sat down to dinner.”

“And we can spread it out again afterwards, if it is not dry,” Margaret observed.

“Dost thou find thyself hungry with seeing those people eating in the corner?” Rachel inquired.

So the basket was unpacked by some, while others drew the grass together near the hedge, and piled it up till it appeared the largest in the field.

“One, two, three,—seven,—nine,—yes, papa, ours is the tenth haycock. Do not you think there will be another for us to make? Do not you think there will be ten more at the other end of the field?”

The vicar feared that the remaining grass would be made into seven, eight, or nine cocks, to avoid paying the church its due.—Alice was immediately anxious to change the subject; and she made a prodigious bustle,—calling one to sit here, and pushing down another there, and raising the youngest little fellow, in the nankeen frock, to sit on the top of the haycock, as on a throne. While she was carving the pie, the child called out “Man! man!”

“Yes, dear; a great many men, and a great many women too,” said Alice, over her task, supposing the child was amused with the circle of labourers.

Her father had not sat down. He was contemplating, perhaps calculating, the size of the field. His back was therefore turned to the party of merry children. The next moment came something which stunned them like a thunder-bolt,—the report of fire-arms as if among them,—as if out of the haycock. They sat immoveable, for a second or two, till the vicar, who seemed to be balancing himself on his feet, staggered, fell sideways, and rolled over on his face. None who heard Alice’s shriek ever forgot it. She alone started up; her companions sat mute; the haymakers were all looking, but they did not come. How the poor thing pulled her father’s arm, in the attempt to raise him! How the complaining sound “I can’t! I can’t!” went to his heart,—which had not ceased to beat. He tried to turn himself, and did so.

“Turn me, dear child; do not raise me,” he said.

“Come, come! O, why don’t you come?” cried Alice, waving her arms towards the haymakers. Her companions joined her in shouting for help; and, at length, several men came forward. Nobody asked who had done this; but one offered to go for the doctor, and another for her uncle Jerom, and a third for Susan. Her father himself settled what should be done. His brother and the surgeon were to be summoned, and he would not be removed till they came; only propped up with hay, so as to breathe a little more easily. He asked if any one knew who had done this?

“It is more like you can tell than I,” observed the man he seemed particularly to address. “Perhaps you may recollect having offended somebody.”

Alice sprang to the child on the haycock, and asked where he had seen a man just now. The child pointed to the other side of the haycock. Somebody had been crouching there; and he must have entered and departed through a hole in the hedge, which seemed to have been made for the purpose.

Half a dozen of the haymakers passed through this hole; but they all came back with the same story,—that no trace of any person was to be found in the next field. Alice believed, in her impatience, that she could have found the murderer if she had been the pursuer; but who but she would chafe her father’s clammy hands, and pass an arm beneath his head, and fan him as his faintness increased? While listening, in hope that

he would speak, a distant sound smote her heart,—the tolling of the church-bell. Her father felt the throb of her heart, and smiled as he said,

“It is not so, dear child. They are not tolling for me before I am dead. It is the lawsuit—I was aware—I expected a letter to-day, you know.”

“O yes; and I brought you out. I made you come here when you wished to stay at home,” cried she in agony.

“My dear child, it would have happened to-morrow if not to-day. It would have happened in my pulpit if not in this hay-field, Alice. Times and seasons are not in our hands, my child.”

The surgeon soon came, and pronounced that his patient had judged rightly in refusing to be removed. There were several hours of daylight left.—Every one felt that this was the same as saying that the vicar could not live till sunset.

Half the parish were in the field before Jerom appeared. Every one looked grave, and some changed countenance on witnessing Alice’s despair; but there was no expression or semblance of grief for the approaching departure of their pastor. Everything was done that could be done; but more as an office of humanity than of affection. This was not lost on the dying man, and must have caused him the keenest pang of all.—He eagerly welcomed Jerom; for he had much to say to him.

“This is a sad ending of my ministry,” said he; “but it is by no means a new thing for Christ’s ministers to die in upholding the rights of his church. God knows I have always been willing; but I grieve, (may he pardon me!) that he has seen fit to make crime the instrument.”

“Can we forgive the criminal?”

“I do from my heart, and have long done so. Yes. I thought it would end in this way, and prepared for it, as you will see when you come to undertake the charge of Alice. You will go home with her, Jerom, and stay till she has to leave the vicarage. See that she has her full right,—that she stays till she has fulfilled the month’s warning of my successor, after his induction. Do not let her remove a day earlier than the law obliges her. I am urgent about this, because I believe the people will run riot against the church as soon as I am gone; and I am anxious that all decencies and proprieties should be observed.”

Jerom promised.

“I have left enough, I trust, for her support; and I bequeath to you the corn and other crops in the ground. If my successor should be inducted before the severance of any crops in which he has an interest, you will, of course, aid him in recovering his dues, as you would aid me. If not inducted till after severance, he may be spared the battle till next year. But, Jerom, be mindful that the clergy must fight, side by side, like brothers, in the present fearful state of the church, when its rights are evaded, and its claims mocked at, and its ministers murdered in the scene of God’s bounties!”

Jerom checked his vehemence; and the dying man presently declared himself willing to leave the care of the church in the hands of Him who founded it. He died without one suspicion that the church for which he had sacrificed himself was not indeed the church of Christ in all its parts, as much as in the name which it has dared to assume. Not a doubt entered his mind that his devotion to his office and its claims was not of the true apostolical character. It never occurred to him, that he or his church might be answerable for the degradation of Christianity and the deterioration of morals in his parish.

He died,—just as the sun was declining over the scene of God’s bounties, as the vicar had truly described this place. There was a joyous twittering of birds in the hedges, and the light breeze which fanned the hair of the dead man brought sweet scents to those who surrounded him. The cattle in the meadows rose from their grassy couch, and moved homewards as the shadows of the willows lengthened. The sheep that had been shorn stood bleating on the slope, or beside the pool, as if wondering why the shearers had left them alone after stripping them of the fleeces that lay strewn upon the grass. The old church looked beautiful, dressed in ivy, and brightened with the latter sunshine, and overshadowing the tombs around it. Yet this fair scene was one of misery. The very church-bell was tolled in malice. The hedge concealed a murderer. The milk-maids and the shearers were gone to gaze with more awe than love on the passing away of him who should have taught them a better evening thanksgiving than this. If there was any acknowledgment of God and his bounties, it was in one or two who made it in humiliation rather than in joy. What kind of Christianity could have been here taught, producing such a result as this?—a Christianity mixed up and defiled with superstition and worldliness; and which could therefore no more bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness than a sun in eclipse can shed broad day.

As the body was carried home, all the people who had not been in the field came out of their houses. Mr. Mackintosh was seen standing at his gate, looking grave, but unmoved. He had something to say on the occasion, though there was less of triumph in his tone than some who knew him would have expected.

“This comes of making a clergyman a revenue officer,” he muttered. “Poor Hellyer might have made a very good clergyman, or a very good revenue officer; but it is beyond any man’s power to be both, without betraying the one trust or the other.”

His housekeeper appeared,—tearful,—to ask leave to bring Miss Alice into the house. She ought not to be in such a crowd as that, in all her grief, and none of her friends with her.—Leave was eagerly given: but the housekeeper hesitated.

“Why don’t you go? Do not lose a moment.”

“If I was sure, sir—if you would promise not to be very ready to tell Miss Alice that there is no chance of her meeting her father any more—”

“Certainly not. Certainly not. I am not clear on the point myself, and never professed to be so. It is only when they build up upon their absurd superstitions—But go.”

Alice was brought in, and was not long without a friend by her side. Mrs. Lambert, who had been too far off to hear the news, had observed from the high summerhouse the crowd just leaving the field, and moving along the road. She had hastily descended, and had joined the people just as they were passing the church,—just in time to hear the remarks upon the tolling of the bell.

“Ay; that’s for the gaining of his lawsuit,—and much good it will do him now! They say he was loth to come abroad this morning, because he expected good news of his lawsuit.”

“He did worse in beginning that lawsuit than in coming abroad this morning. ’Tis my opinion that it was that lawsuit that killed him.”

“Did ye hear his order about the wool-tithe, as he went by the pool this morning? So proud! He desired it might be set out for him against he came back.”

“I hope, friend,” Mrs. Lambert had observed, “that thou art observing these things rather as a lesson on the frailness of life, than as taunting the departed.”

The man thought that if the vicar had been paid like the dissenting ministers of the next town, and had given himself up to his office, without extorting tithes, his life would have been no more uncertain than any other man’s. He should not say this the less now that the vicar was being carried dead before him, than he had always said it when the vicar was standing up in the pulpit on Sundays, or handling fleeces on Mondays.

Where were all Alice’s friends?—Uncle Jerom was following the body. Mrs. Byrne was nowhere to be seen. It was many days before she visited Alice; and when she came, she could do nothing but weep. Mrs. Byrne was remarked by every one to be an altered woman from that day.

Byrne was in the crowd; but Alice was afraid of him, and always kept out of his way. Charles and Joseph were in pursuit of the murderer,—whom, however, they could not find. It is believed to this day, that he was harboured by some one in the neighbourhood; or he could not have evaded the strict search instituted by the magistrates, as soon as the event became known to them.

“I am glad you are come, Mrs. Lambert,” said Mr. Mackintosh, when she made her appearance, after delaying a moment to recover an appearance of calmness. “I am glad you are come. We do not know what to do with this poor child.”

“Thou hast not the heart to attack her faith at such a moment; and thou dost not know how to speak on matters of faith, but in the way of attack. Is that it, friend Mackintosh?—I agree with thee, that there is no worldly comfort which will to-day soothe this poor child.”

“All you say about my fondness for attack may be very true; but see whether it has half the effect in this parish of the superstition of its pastor,—or of the system which

made him its pastor:—I care not which may claim the honour of doing most mischief.”

“I grant that thy principles have led to no murder here, and that the vicar would have been wise to ask himself, while censuring thee, whether he was not playing thy game for thee better than thou couldst do it for thyself. But, friend, that is no excuse for thy being as intolerant to others as the church has been to thee. Between you, religion (or, as thou wouldst say, morals) has had so little chance, that I would not advise either of you to boast of the other’s delinquencies, lest the argument should end in the display of thine own.—I will only just mention the name of Byrne, as a sanction to my charge.”

“You do not think he is the—” And Mr. Mackintosh’s countenance now showed some emotion.

“I have heard no one named as the murderer,” Mrs. Lambert quietly replied.

Mr. Mackintosh presently repented having allowed Alice to be brought in. It made him completely wretched. Whether her grief was ungovernable, as at first, or mild and reasonable, as it was when Mrs. Lambert had been with her awhile, it was equally painful to him. He could do nothing with minds but question and taunt them; and here, where the mind was too childish to be questioned to any purpose, and too much harassed to allow of taunting, there was no inducement to him to bear to witness the suffering. When he was tired of being first ashamed of his own helplessness, and then of being cross with his housekeeper, (who would not quarrel with him, because she saw he was trying to carry off some troublesome tenderness) he seized his hat, and walked out.—Mrs. Lambert observed, that he went in the direction of Byrne’s cottage.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VIII.

BENEFIT OF CLERGY.

Sir William Hood (who was travelling abroad) supposed, like everybody else, that the vicar was alone to blame for what had happened. Nobody but those on the spot,—none but the sufferers,—dreamed of finding fault with the system under which precisely the same grievances might recur. They saw but too well that the virtues of the clergyman must, under such a system, injure himself or them. If his virtues were like those of the late vicar, centring in zeal for the church, he would oppress the parish as the late vicar had done. If they consisted of disinterestedness and mercy, they must injure himself in his worldly interests. The same temptations must also again beset the parishioners;—temptation to withhold the extreme dues of a moderate pastor, and to defraud a strict one. The sufferers agreed, in short, with him who said of the tithe system, “It has made the clergyman’s income to fall with his virtues, and to rise with his bad qualities; just as it has made the parishioner to lose by being ingenuous, and to save by dishonesty.”—They mourned over their liability to a repetition of their grievances; and their only comfort was in the hope that Peterson would not be again appointed to rule over them.

In this hope they were not disappointed. It was thought fitting by the ordinary and impropiator, that the circumstances of the scene should be changed as much as possible, in order that future irritation might be avoided; and Peterson received notice that his services would not be required by the future incumbent. He quarrelled with the vicar’s executor, before going out of office, respecting the amount of rent due for tithes received up to the day of the owner’s death, which unfortunately left room for a dispute of this kind, from not having happened on a quarter-day. The vicar’s tithes were collected in kind by the churchwardens, for the benefit of the future incumbent, the services of the curate being meantime paid out of the fund. Sir William Hood appointed another agent to collect his tithes.

During Jerom’s residence at the vicarage,—that is, during the few weeks which Alice’s friends thought long enough for the assertion of that dignity on which her father had bestowed some of his last thoughts,—it occurred to many people that Jerom would like very much to be the future incumbent of this vicarage —Jerom did indeed wish it. The allotment of new land, in which he had invested his share of the bounty, did not answer. The tenant did not, he thought, cultivate it properly; and he had no influence over the tenant, whom he had allowed to build on the ground, and from whom he had no means of purchasing the new erections. He was almost as poor as before he obtained the bounty; and could not well have got through the year but for his brother’s legacy of the little crops that were in the vicarage-ground.—He must get on, however, on this little wealth, as well as he could; for the parishioners had no intention of allowing anybody connected with the late vicar to be their pastor. They gave Jerom to understand this very plainly.

That wealth of his was indeed but small. The season turned out even worse than was expected; and so generally, that its effects were felt by every class in society. Wages had been rising all the year, and this occasioned a further rise in the price of produce; and these things all together proved to such as had eyes to see, the essential vices of the tithe-tax. Never had there been a greater outlay with a smaller per centage of gain to the cultivator than this season: never had tithe been so expensive to him as this year, when he could least afford it: never had the labourers, whose increased wages would not suffice to buy them a sufficiency of bread, so enviously regarded the increase in the revenue of the church;—an increase which arose from the same cause as their privations. Many were now convinced who had not been convinced before, that the bread-eaters of Britain pay a capitation tax to the church. The average consumption of grain being commonly allowed to be equivalent to a quarter of wheat a head, wheat pays a shilling a bushel as tithe, when wheat sells at 80s.; so that, at that price, the church exacts a capitation-tax of 8s.; it being clear that 72s. would be a remunerating price to the grower, if he had no tithe to pay. Many now allowed, who had not been fond of the subject before, that it is unjust that the religion of little more than half the nation should absorb a larger portion of the national resources, in proportion as these resources fail. Many now hinted, that if the preachers of the gospel had no power to feed the hungry with loaves in the wilderness, they ought not to be entitled to exact larger tribute from their hearers, the more their hearers hungered.

There were many dreary days this autumn; but it was on one of the very dreariest that Joseph ran out of the farm-house to invite his landlord to shelter till the storm should be over. “Indeed,” he added, “we wish particularly to speak to thee on a matter of some importance.” Mr. Mackintosh was not so fond of a pouring rain as to be unwilling to let his horse be led to a stable, and himself to a crackling wood fire, from which orderly children moved away to make room for him.

“I hope you have not heard of another suspected murderer,” said he. “I am quite tired of receiving intimations on that head, convinced as I am that we shall never be any wiser.”

“We have nothing to say to thee of any new suspicion: but why shall we never be any wiser?”

“Because we all have a pretty clear notion that there are many who could tell if they would: and if they have not told yet, notwithstanding the fair opportunity that has been given them, and the high reward offered, it is scarcely likely that they will change their minds now. Every new information is meant to put us on a false scent, depend upon it. I hope the people will leave off playing such a farce. We have all our own guesses, I dare say, as to which was the fellow, and where he might have been found the next night, and why a stranger should have been the one to deal the blow. He considered himself perhaps, as others have done before him, as filling an office like the hangman’s,—putting the finish to a criminal.”

“I call this unprofitable talk,” observed the plain Mrs. Lambert. “Wilt thou hear the favour my sons have to ask of thee?”

Mr. Mackintosh was not fond of being asked favours; but he could not refuse to listen, in return for shelter, warmth, and good ale. The young men were very urgent to be released from their agreement about the Quarry Wood farm. Three years only of their lease had run; but their losses had been so great that they earnestly desired to give it up.

Mr. Mackintosh thought he had great reason to complain;—so much reason that he did not feel himself bound to consider the interests of the Lamberts in any such way as this. Was it not a subject of complaint that the land was ill-managed? Might not any one see at a glance how far inferior its condition was to that of the Abbey Farm?

“And whose fault was that?” Charles asked. “Did it not arise from the one being titheable, and the other, tithe-free?”

“Which was known to thee when thou gavest thy money for it, I suppose,” added the mother.

“I would really advise thee,” interposed Joseph, “to find another tenant who does not labour under our scruples regarding the tithe, and who has therefore a better chance of making the undertaking answer.”

“You seriously advise me. I really am much obliged to you, Mr. Joseph.”

“I seriously advise thee,—for this reason: that if we do contrive to pay thee rent, it can only be by cropping and exhausting the best land on the farm in a manner which will not please thee, but to which we shall be driven. Therefore, if thou canst find a capitalist who will diligently set himself to contend about the tithe in a way which we, for conscience sake, cannot do, it may be equally for thy interest and ours.”

“If you choose to find such an one, perhaps I may listen to what you have to say.—But I won’t promise.”

“Why? does it give thee pleasure to hold us to a bad bargain?”

“Or to have my sons for tenants, perhaps,” said Mrs. Lambert, who sometimes accused herself of being a partial mother.—Mr. Mackintosh nodded at her, and said he had so little to complain of with respect to the Abbey Farm, that he would offer this much;—to let the young men have the Quarry Wood Farm rent-free for the remainder of the lease, they bearing the charges on the land.

They were obliged by this offer of compromise, but as far from hopeful as ever. They had much rather give up the undertaking altogether: but Mr. Mackintosh would go no further. He had every reason to believe that the farm would not let rent-free, on condition of the tenant paying the taxes, civil and ecclesiastical.

The lease must run out before it changed hands, even at the risk of its being left in bad condition,—half neglected and half exhausted.

“Come, cheer up, sons!” said their mother. “Gloomy faces are not becoming in us who profess to be more free of the world than some others. You know I never encouraged high notions in you when we thought we were growing rich; and I will not praise you for being low-spirited while you are doing your best—”

“For these children, as well as yourselves,” observed Mr. Mackintosh.

“These children will grow up to take care of themselves, and help us in turn, if we want help. And before that time, let us hope, other Christians will find, as we do, that they can worship without taking the bread out of one another’s mouths. There will be more people willing to worship then, I fancy. My sons may live to see the gospel esteemed as able to support itself as when Christ preached it.”

“And you may live to see it, ma’am. It is an experiment which cannot be very long delayed in this country,—as I believe a large majority of thinkers agree in deciding, however they may differ as to what is superstition and what is not.”

“Thou wilt not find many who will agree with thee, friend, that there must be superstition in believing in things unseen;—no, not if thou shouldst live a thousand years. But thou art pretty secure of good company in declaring some things to be superstition which were so a thousand years ago,—such as asking in God’s name for gifts that are not gifts, and setting up a priesthood in Christ’s name, when, if Christ said one thing more plainly than another, it was that there should be no more priesthods.”

“And to suppose that men will care for any matters of faith, be they what they may, when the bread of these men is taken to uphold that faith—it is folly!”

“Worse folly than any faith can be, I agree with thee in thinking. This is what we call shutting up the kingdom of heaven against men. It occurs to me, friend, that though thou hast a taste for being singular, thou art of the same mind with some who took these matters to heart very long ago. I ask thy pardon for observing (I know thou dost not like to agree with any thing in Scripture,)—that some one said before thy time and mine, that the Lord is not pleased with offerings, such as thousands of rams and calves of a year old. He had rather have justice and mercy. I wish the church could be persuaded to go back to this old Scripture.”

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ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

TAXATION.

No. III.

THE

JERSEYMEN MEETING.

A Tale.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

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CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

THE JERSEYMEN MEETING.

Chapter I.

A PHENOMENON.

The moral sense of some people is shocked by the sentiment that it is pleasant to stand in safety on the shore to watch the effects of a storm at sea; but perhaps none were ever found to dispute the pleasantness of standing idle on the heights above a shore to watch the proceedings of busy people at sea. There are parts of the coast of Jersey where this luxury may be enjoyed in absolute perfection; where not only the features of nature are full of beauty, but where the spectator is unmolested by the presence of any less happy than himself, and where the industry which he witnesses is sure of its due reward.

Such a station is the height of Anne Ville, which overlooks the thriving village of Gorey in Jersey. It is luxury to sit on the remains of the Druidical temple there, and think of nothing less animating than the congregation of objects near; the bay of St. Catherine behind, where green lanes lead from the very brink of the tide, each to its own snug farm-house and blossoming orchard on the hill-side, and the solitary tower of Archirondel, surrounded on its rocky station by the blue waters of the bay: close at hand, Geoffry's rock, from which, instead of criminals being cast into the sea, as it is said they once were, white sea-birds take their flight, scared by the laughter of children near their haunts: the noble castle of Mont Orgueil overhanging the waters, and casting upon them the shadow of its ruined battlements, while its mantle of ivy waves in the evening breeze:—the fishing village below, sending out and receiving back the oyster boats which throng about the pier in the season;—the villages on the distant coast of France, when the western sun lights them up into brilliant contrast with the intervening expanse of dark blue; and far beyond these, on the extreme horizon, the dim cathedral of Coutances. To spend a May evening in the centre of this scene is a luxury to a stranger whose heart is not, like that of a native, in one of the farmhouses in the interior, or among the oysters on the beach below. A stranger is pretty secure, however, of having this Druidical seat to himself on a May evening. So many repairs are wanted for the boats, so much sail-cloth and cordage is called for, and so large a portion of supplies is required for the little market of Gorey, towards the close of the oyster season, that the men are more likely to be guiding their creaking carts through the bowery lanes, and the maidens carrying down the hills the produce of their far-famed cows, than to be looking abroad from the heights of Anne Ville.

On such an evening, however, a few seasons ago, some one might be seen keeping a look-out from the poquelaye, (as the Jersey people call a Druidical remain like that at Anne Ville,) whom no one could doubt to be a native. He was a young man of about twenty, whose sallow face bore testimony to his diet being that of a Jersey farmhouse, while his knitted garments pointed him out as the son of one of the thrifty dames of

the island who look suspiciously on all manufactures which threaten to supersede the work of their own hands. Aaron le Brocq looked indolent enough as he leaned with his elbows upon the great stone, and his dull eye wandered over the ocean, never once lighting up when a sail caught the yellow ray which slanted from the west: but Aaron came hither on business. Never was cordage so much wanted as now; and Aaron's stock of hemp was exhausted; and day by day he came hither to watch for the arrival of some one of the friendly vessels which must be on the way to supply his need. There were barks innumerable within sight; but even Aaron's dull eye could perceive, almost at a glance, that none of those near were what he wanted. Besides the native-built boats, there were many English vessels sailing hither and thither. Several which had been accustomed to navigate the broad, smooth Medway, were now tossing and turning in the currents and eddies caused by the ridges of low rocks which nearly surround the island, and have proved its surest defence during the wars of the two countries between whose grasp it seems to lie. French homeward-bound vessels were gliding between the shores; and a few of other countries, bringing supplies as much needed as hemp, were crossing Grouville Bay on their way to St. Heliers. Aaron would go to St. Heliers too, in the morning, if he saw no vessel before dark which might be supposed to come from the Baltic. He would go and learn what other people thought of this scarcity of hemp.

It is to be supposed that Aaron fell into a reverie about this projected trip to the port, and that he was thinking more of the market-place or custom-house of St. Heliers than of anything within ken on sea or land; for he started as if at the touch of the conjuring rod that he was taught to fear in his childhood, when his friend, Charles Malet, laid one hand on his shoulder, while with the other he pointed southwest, saying,

“There will be no time for growing drowsy at the poquelaye after sunset to-morrow, if yonder vessel be from Riga, as they say she is. She will be in port as soon as we can get there, and perhaps we may find her cargo all gone in the scramble.”

Aaron was on his feet in a moment, wondering how his thoughts could have wandered away so far from the Baltic as to let a sail from that quarter cross the wide bay, and almost disappear behind La Roque Point unperceived by him. But there were many things besides hemp which this ship might be bringing to Jersey; tallow for the candles, or oil for the soap which some of the islanders were enabled to manufacture for a far larger market than their own; or corn for home consumption, while they sent their own to England. This may seem to some an ingenious project, designed to benefit the shipping interest. To permit ships from Russia to sail by the coasts of England, and land their corn in Jersey and Guernsey, from whence an equal supply has at last to be brought to England, seems like a benevolent scheme to give employment to some who would otherwise be paupers. It looks like an approach towards the fulfilment of the aspirations of the ship-owner, that every merchant-vessel should be permitted to sail three times round the island of Great Britain before landing its cargo. But, for whomsoever the plan was first devised,—whether for the ship or land owners of Britain,—its effect is to enrich the inhabitants of Jersey and Guernsey at the expense of the bread-eaters of England. These islands are exempt from the bread-tax, as from all the bad taxes of Great Britain, except tithes. Their inhabitants, being allowed to buy wheat, without restriction, wherever they please, can purchase it

at 45s. per quarter, while that which their fields produce is bought by the English labourer at some price between 60s. and 70s. The benefit which accrues to the Jerseyman is the difference between the price he pays, and that which he receives when the amount of duty is deducted;—a benefit marked enough to induce him to call for supplies from a distant shore, and to retain the merchants of his own port in his service. No wonder that any foreign vessel which passed within sight of the heights above Gorey might be supposed to be bringing corn to the port of St. Heliers. No wonder that Aaron was bewildered in a manner which would have stamped him a half-idiot in England, when a perfectly new incident presently occurred.

As soon as the sea became dusky in the twilight, the two friends turned their backs upon it, in order to pursue their way to the dwelling of Aaron's father,—a small farmhouse in the valley on the other side the first ridge of hills which stretched north and south. They had not proceeded far over the down when they were accosted by a person whose appearance excited their wonder, while his business surprised them yet more. Scarcely half-dressed, and unattended, though he was blind, he was a mystery to Aaron.

“What sort of charity do you wish me to show you?” he asked, in answer to the beggar's petition.

“What you please, sir,” replied the beggar: “but I have not had a morsel to-day, and I have no place to lay my head in to-night.”

“How happens that? I'm afraid you have displeased Mr. De la Mare?”

“Mr. who, please, sir?”

“Mr. De la Mare, the hospital governor. You don't know who he is? How came you here, then?”

Malet had seen more of the world than Aaron. He suggested that the beggar might have come over in some of the oyster vessels from Kent,—perhaps even from London; and that he might never have set foot in St. Heliers.

Would he get into the hospital among the blind? Aaron would take him to St. Heliers the next morning, and try to procure him admission. Stephen did not exactly wish this. He could find his way about, and did not like being shut up. If the gentleman would only bestow a little charity, that was all he asked;—by charity, he meant a little money for present use.

“But what will you do when it is gone?” asked Aaron. “You cannot work, I suppose, without the use of your sight.”

Stephen (for so the beggar called himself) had not been able to do a stroke of work these ten years. He trusted to the charitable and humane to take care of him.

“But you will not take their charity. You refuse the hospital! I don't see what you would have.”

“He would live by begging, I dare say,” observed Malet, by way of elucidation.

“What! by asking every day for bread! I never heard of such a thing.”

Charles Malet had once been told that this was a very common thing in England. Besides the number of poor who were admitted into charitable houses, like those at St. Heliers, there were many who did not know, any morning of the year, where they should rest at night. Aaron thought this a miserable lot; but Stephen the beggar seemed wonderfully cheerful under it. He did not look ashamed, as a native would have done, of his being only half-clothed;—perhaps the not seeing his tatters had something to do with this. He had certainly been humming a tune, as he ambled along, when the young men were approaching him; and even now, though he spoke of hunger, he seemed ready to break out into singing or joking in the intervals of the piteous looks he assumed. Aaron, as a matter of course, took him home, but felt rather uncomfortable in doing so. He was afraid that his father might be displeased if it should turn out that the beggar was playing off a hoax; and that his mother might be alarmed if Stephen should prove a half-wit, or to be under a spell; and Aaron could scarcely doubt the one or the other to be the case. He took Stephen by the hand, however, and led him on; not failing to remark how marvellously his charge happened to escape hurting his ill-shod feet against the large sharp stones which lay in the road.

An opportunity occurred of introducing the stranger to a part of the family before reaching the farmhouse; an opportunity which Malet was the first to discern. Jersey is a land of trotting brooks. As every dwelling has hills somewhere near it, every dwelling has a stream within reach. There was one at the bottom of Le Brocq’s orchard; and there were the women of the family assembled this evening, when the young men crossed the ridge and descended into the valley—assembled on an occasion of great importance. It was the first day of washing week; and as washing week came but twice a year, it was sure to be a busy time. The profusion of snow-white caps spread on the grass formed the chief light in the landscape, for the grey stone farmhouse, roofed with dark thatch, nestled dimly among the trees; so that even if all had not been alike mantled with ivy, the dwelling would scarcely have been discernible. The brook was more heard than seen, and the high ferns on the opposite side presented the appearance of a smooth green carpet. But few blossoms remained in the orchard to distinguish it from the oak copse which sheltered it towards the east. Little could be distinctly seen but the heaps of linen on the bank, and the moving figures beside it. They were the two daughters of Le Brocq, and a damsel, the servant at the farmhouse. They were finishing their work for the night; and when Malet ran down to them with a lover’s speed, he found Louise rising from her knees beside the little pool which had been her station all day, and declaring that she could see no longer, and that it was time to go home to supper. Anna was meanwhile spreading more linen on the ferns, where it might be bleached by the morning sun; and Victorine, the maid, put the materials of their next day’s work in an appointed place, among the roots of an old oak. The brook, meanwhile, rippled and splashed, carrying down the defilements of soap which had offended it all day, and washing out the pools in which the work had been performed. Stephen made bold to ask his conductor what all this was about, and to declare what shameful waste it would be thought in England to wash linen in a running stream, where as much soap would be lost as

would buy much of the linen. Stephen was right; but this was a consideration which the Jersey people had little occasion to regard. Their soap was not taxed either in its materials or its manufacture; and few articles can be obtained with more ease or less cost than soap, when this is the case. Any person in Jersey was at liberty to buy oil or tallow direct from the Baltic ships in the ports, without asking the leave of any custom-house officer. If he chose to buy the cheap potash furnished by the interminable Russian forests, he had no duty to pay. If he found sea-weed enough on the nearest shore to supply this as well as other purposes, he was subjected to no other interference than the injunction to cut it at the right season. He might make his soap when and where, and in whatever quantities he pleased; and the cost of it was next to nothing. No one there was obliged to sigh either at his children's dirt, or at the cost of keeping them clean. The amount of soap used was little more thought of than that of the water which ran past his own door.

Stephen seemed much disposed to join the group beside the brook,—another proof to Aaron that he was not aware of the state of his costume. He was not allowed to descend, as he wished; but must submit to be led across a back field, and through the orchard, that he might reach the house, and be clothed before he was presented to the family. Aaron could not think of showing him in a state of such degradation as that in which he had found him.

“Who is this?” inquired Le Brocq, who was drawing cider from the cask which was niched near the door. “How can De la Mare let any one come to such a pass?” Then, as Stephen came within hearing, the farmer told him he should be welcome to supper and shelter for the night, and that he might depend on being forwarded to St. Heliers the next morning. In an aside, he desired his wife to fetch an old garment of his, wherewith to clothe Stephen, instead of using any of Aaron's good clothes for the purpose.

Mrs. Le Brocq wanted to know when the girls were coming. It was too dark for them to see what they were about; and the soup was ready; and she was sure Louise would be over-tired if she staid at her work so long. She was comforted with the news that they would presently come in, and that Malet was with Louise, to take care of her.

By the time that Stephen was dressed, and seated somewhat nearer than he liked to the great fire of vraic (a sea-weed which is used, first for fuel and then for manure, in Jersey), the young washerwomen appeared. Mrs. Le Brocq and Anna took charge of the supper table, while Louise, who was, or was fancied to be, rather delicate, was tended by her lover, and Victorine was at every one's call, besides having to lay down a bed for Stephen, as the hour of rest approached.

Stephen seemed less disposed for mirth at the supper table than when he was first met in his destitute condition. Hungry as he was, he could not eat the soup, made of lard and cabbage, which the rest of the party seemed to relish as if it had been made of gravy meat, and peas. After many attempts, he gave it up; and was so nauseated that he had little relish left for the bread, cheese, and cider with which Mrs. Le Brocq compassionately supplied him. He was sensible of the incessant motion of knitting needles all around him, in every interval of eating. All the four women were indeed

knitting when doing nothing else; and Stephen felt rather awkward in the midst of so much industry. Nobody was very merry; there seemed to be some cause of discontent among the party, though Aaron showed that he was well pleased at the prospect of obtaining on the morrow the materials which would enable him to supply his customers with ropes.

“I am glad some luck has befallen you,” observed the mother, “since Charles is never to have any. I wonder whether there be another lad in the island so shiftless as he; to have courted my Louise, and not have a home to take her to.”

Le Brocq shook his head and muttered; Charles looked abashed, and Anna said, hesitatingly, and only loud enough for her sister and Charles to hear, that such ill-fortune could not, she trusted, last long. Such a thing had never happened before, she believed, as a sober man being disappointed of a settlement three times over. She hoped it would please God that the hand of the diligent should make riches, and that Charles would not lose heart.

Charles had lost heart many times lately; and now he left his supper unfinished, and sat pondering the charms of the various cottages of which he had missed the acquisition. He was not in poverty, being employed with Aaron in ropemaking, but the parents of Louise would not let him have her till he could take her to a home as comfortable as that which she must leave. He began sometimes to fear that he should be sent about his business, as being no proper match for Louise. Stephen made such advances of sympathy as the little conversation enabled him to do. He took up his glass of cider, and turning to Malet, begged to drink to the young man “finding something to set his hand to,” and to his “carrying the day with his lass, at any rate,” and he should be pleased to be at the wedding.

Malet thanked him kindly; and Stephen went on to suggest that it was a thousand pities to lose heart and let the time go by. Charles should do as people in England did, marry when the young lady was in the mind, and see what would come of trusting.

“And what comes of it in England?” inquired Malet, lending an attentive ear.

Stephen made rather a lame story of the happy consequences of this sort of trust, except on the point that he was quite sure of,—that there was always the parish to depend on at last. He helped out his explanation with a song about love and banishing care, which Malet would have ventured to praise very highly, but that Mrs. Le Brocq began to look angry. She muttered something about seeing Charles, some day or other, borrowing another man’s coat and craving another man’s supper, and then singing songs about not caring.

Charles showed by a gesture that there was the main difference between Stephen and himself, that the one was blind and the other not. Le Brocq was offended by his wife’s gross breach of hospitality; Louise was crying; and all went wrong. Stephen took the liberty of beginning another song by which he hoped to make every body laugh and grow good-humoured; but before it had had time to operate, he was obliged to break off by the entrance of some person whose horse he had heard stop before the door.

“If you are come to supper, Mr. Janvrin,” observed Le Brocq, “I am afraid you will not enjoy yourself as we could wish. If you had come half-an-hour earlier—”

“I am come on business; and when, I tell you that I was at St. John’s this morning, and am now come from St. Martin’s, you will guess what I am here for.”

“Well; out with it! What is in hand now?”

“Why, you know very well. You heard of the rate laid upon you and your neighbours, for the help of the government in the new improvements.”

“But I offered horse and cart and man for a week. That is enough for my share, surely.”

“For the new road. Yes. But the States call for money, too, as you must be aware: and here is what you must pay,” showing his list.

Le Brocq said something about the many calls on people for money in these days,—what with daughters marrying, and governments making new roads. Nevertheless, he sent Aaron for his money-bag, and counted out the sum, while the tax-gatherer refreshed himself with the remains of the supper. When Stephen heard the clink of the coin, he observed that the people in his country would never submit to pay taxes in this manner. It would be as much as the tax-gatherer’s life would be worth to ride about the country, taking money out of people’s pockets like a footpad. Janvrin wondered what the gentleman could mean; and Aaron inquired whether the English paid no taxes.

“Pay taxes! to be sure they do. How should such a fine country get on without taxes? But, bless your soul, paying taxes there is the easiest thing in the world. There’s no trouble whatever in it. The government takes all the trouble, and the people don’t so much as know when they are paying taxes.”

The family all thought this must be charming; and Aaron whispered to Malet that, after all, it might be better for him to go to England: for taxes were a consideration to a man who was going to marry. But Malet wished to hear a little more first. How was it that taxation was such an easy matter in England?

“O, I only know I never paid a tax in my life. I have not paid a tax these ten years. Why, yes: some people pay them; but it is only by giving a trifle more,—nothing worth speaking of,—for things that they buy.”

“Like our duty on spirits,” observed the collector, nodding to Malet, who was all ear.

“That is a very good plan,” observed Le Brocq. “I always liked that plan of laying a tax on spirits.”

“Well you may,” observed the collector, laughing: “for I believe you have never had a gallon of spirits in your house since its roof was on.”

“O, it’s a wise tax,” replied the farmer. “So the government in England is kept up by a tax on spirits.”

“They must drink a deal of spirits,” said Malet, “or there must be other dues;—harbour fees, like ours, or the like.”

Stephen did not deny that the spirit-tax was not the only one: but whatever the others might be, it was only laying a farthing or two here and there which nobody minded paying; and which, indeed, none knew that they paid. What were the taxed articles? Malet inquired.—O, there were several. Lace and silk stockings, he had heard: and a gentleman in Kent was saying that hops paid some sort of charge. Malet and Louise looked at each other. This would suit them exactly. They had never seen silk stockings or lace, except in the shop-windows at St. Heliers; and they drank cider.—Well: anything else? Any common articles? Mr. Janvrin asked. Bread or sugar, timber or linen, soap or tobacco? Any of these? Why, some of them: but the merest trifle! and it was uncommonly pleasant to live in a free sort of way, without any tax-gatherer to come to the cottage-door, and ask for so many shillings out of the poor man’s earnings.

“Uncommonly pleasant,” repeated Le Brocq, with a sigh, as Janvrin pocketed the money on the table, and made an entry in his book. “I think I shall ask one of the Constables to speak to the Bailly, and try whether we can’t get the States to think of taxing us as easily as the English. An uncommonly pleasant way it must be, to be sure.”

“Uncommonly pleasant,” observed Janvrin, “if the poor man does not pay pounds without knowing it, instead of shillings when he is asked. Your guest said something about footpads: but I had rather be robbed by a footpad than by a pickpocket.”

The girls asked their mother what was a footpad, and what was a pickpocket. She frowned, and whispered to them not to ask: it was something very bad indeed. They blushed, and could only hope that nobody had heard their question.

Upon Stephen’s half-smiling and saying, with a turn of the head towards Janvrin, that every man was in honour bound to defend his own occupation, but that he was proud to say, the English had no relish for getting out their moneybags when the government bade them, and preferred paying their little matter of tax their own way, the good-will of the family towards Janvrin was visibly overclouded. Nobody pressed him to stay; and when, on his departure, he once more mentioned that Le Brocq’s cart and horse would be expected to appear on the new road the next Monday morning, the farmer looked very grave in giving his assent.

Stephen was abundantly questioned about England before he was allowed to go to rest: and when, at length, Aaron led him to the corner where he was to sleep, and promised to leave no stone unturned to get him into the hospital, Malet was mourning with Louise that he had wasted so much time in seeking an establishment in Jersey; and the farmer determined that he would not close his eyes till he had calculated how much money he had paid over to the States since he began housekeeping, without

reckoning the use the island had had of his horse and cart, as often as improvements had been carried on in his parish.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter II.

A LEGACY.

When Aaron stole to the bedside of his guest, early the next morning, to rouse him for his journey, he was surprised to find nobody there. Not only had the guest disappeared, but half the bedding,—the whole of which would not much encumber a strong man. The only supposition that could be entertained was that Stephen had gone out, with a blanket in addition to his scanty clothing, to please himself with the morning sunshine; an amusement to which there was no impediment of locks and bolts, in this any more than in the neighbouring farmhouses. But Stephen was not to be found in orchard or field; nor did he answer when his name was called, though everybody in the house was wakened by the shout. Louise appeared with her milk-pails, and Anna tripped down to the brook. Mrs. Le Brocq appeared at the window, knitting, and the farmer came out to harness his team, while Victorine swept the kitchen, and prepared to light the fire. Everybody appeared but Stephen. A general admiration of his talents prevailed when it was remarked as a singular thing that a blind man should be able to find the door, and pursue his way over ground that he had traversed but once. The fear was lest he should have lost himself, got entangled in the copse, or soused in the brook;—or,—suppose he should have fallen down the quarry! If he had escaped all these dangers, he must be as acute about finding his way as he had shown himself about taxation, and love and marriage. While this admiration was being expressed, up came Anna from the brook, with a gentle reproof prepared for Victorine, for carrying away the bleaching linen from the place where they had been left the evening before. There was no place where they could bleach more favourably, and Victorine had received no orders to remove them. It was not long before the conviction was forced upon everybody that the linen was stolen. The most valuable part of the clothing of the family was gone. Nearly eighty of the best caps belonging to the four women of the household were carried off, and so many other useful things that the maidens might do nothing but spin, knit, and sew, from this time till Christmas, and yet be obliged to have three or four extra washes. It was a dreadful misfortune. Louise leaned her head against the cow she was milking when the tidings were brought to her. Let Charles be as fortunate as he might, her wedding might be considered as deferred for an indefinite period. Anna hoped against hope that some happy explanation would arise. It seemed impossible that any one should be so wicked as to take, without payment, what did not belong to him. Father and son and Victorine were off in different directions to look for traces of thieves in the fields and highways. Not a cap was to be seen dropped on the grass, nor any shirt frolicking by itself on any bush. Victorine turned back panic-struck, only too well convinced of what she now thought she had suspected all along,—that the guest of the last night had arrived from a far more distant place than England, and that he needed no ship to bring him over the sea. She trembled to think what sort of feet might have been enclosed in her young master's shoes, and what might have been the effects of his eyes, if he had not happily chosen to keep them shut. Aaron did not know that he could do better than pursue his way to St. Heliers, where it was possible that he might

meet with either Stephen or the thief, if they should, after all, not happen to be the same person. So he harnessed a strong little horse of his father's to the cart, drove to his rope-walk, wished that Malet would not be so late in the mornings, but would be at his business in time to help people with advice when they were in a hurry, and drove off. He had not gone far when his sister's voice hailed him. She was running after him with a list of messages from his mother about articles that he was to purchase in the market at St. Heliers, and with a request that if he should be able to learn anything about the lost property, he would take particular care to recover Louise's share first, as poor Louise was in sadder distress than anybody else.

"You will go to Gorey," she suggested. "Some of the English may think there is no harm in taking our caps, and will give you them back again."

"Ask Charles to go there. It will be as much as I can do to make this harness hold out, if I go as straight as an arrow and back again. I had better have kept the last coil of cord I sold to young François; this is as rotten as if the tow had never been twisted."

It was provoking that the harness should break at this moment; and Aaron showed that it was. He twitched the horse's head in its straw collar, knotted the rope rein with some very petulant gestures, told his sister that she deserved to be run over for coming in the way of the long axle of the cart, and finally urged on his rumbling vehicle without a word of farewell.

His haste did not, however, prevent his pausing on some high ground, where an opening in the ridge of hills afforded him a glimpse of the sea, and a distant view of the pier at Gorey. The English oyster-boats were departing for the season. A little fleet of them was standing out from the bay; and in one of them might have been found, as Aaron suspected, the lost property and the blind thief,—if blind he were. The sight of such means of escape stimulated the youth to his pursuit, if indeed it were yet possible to hunt out the guilty from any retreat between Grosnez and La Roque, and bring him to justice.

No person in the least resembling Stephen was to be seen on any of the quays of St. Heliers, nor in the pretty market-place. Mr. De la Mare had not heard of any blind stranger being in the neighbourhood. The vessel from the Baltic was in the harbour,—all safe, and bringing hemp, as Aaron desired. As it was still too early in the morning for the transaction of business on the quay, he thought it best to make his purchases in the market-place, telling every person he met of the family loss. Several people from the country had already taken their places under the piazzas, and had set out their butter, eggs, and vegetables; and the butchers' carts were being unpacked in the centre. Every one was soon in possession of the story. While the early housewife was arguing with the butcher whether she should pay *3d.* or $3\frac{1}{2}d.$ per lb. for his prime beef, she stopped to shake her head over the depravity of the age, in which an open theft had come to be committed in return for hospitality. The maid-servant, who took in the tale with open mouth, while the market-woman counted eggs at *4d.* a dozen into her basket, promised to mention the circumstance wherever she went. The townsman who had risen early that he might have the first choice of fish, spoke of alarming the magistracy and rousing justice.—Then, when Aaron stepped to a shop or two within

sight, to buy two pounds of three shilling tea (his mother made a point of having the best tea), and a supply of fine sugar at *4d.*, half the little boys that were abroad followed him, as if expecting that the thief would be found under the counter or in one of the canisters; and the shopman put on a countenance of concern; and the head of the firm looked mysterious; and altogether the impression was very profound.

All was known at the custom-house before Aaron betook himself thither to inquire about the arrival and departure of vessels. Every man in the establishment,—the principal, the comptroller, and the two subordinates,—was eager to question Aaron as he approached with an air of peculiar gravity. The unloading of *Christiana* deals upon the quay had proceeded without their notice, while engrossed with the tale of the *Le Brocqs'* misfortunes;—not that it was any part of their duty to watch the unloading of Baltic timber; for here the people were allowed to get their timber from any part of the world they pleased, and to give no more than the natural price. They were neither compelled to pay the King for the liberty of using foreign timber at all; nor obliged, by the high duty put upon *Christiana* deals, to take up with the inferior wood of Canada. The custom-house officers looked upon the landing and sale of timber with their hands in their pockets, and as if they had no more concern in the matter than in a bargain about a bunch of asparagus.

Equally indifferent were they about the proceedings of the vessel which brought hemp and tallow. Indeed, the bustle of the port of St. Heliers,—a bustle which increases from year to year,—takes place altogether among the buyers and sellers. Tax-gatherers have little concern in the matter. When the harbour-master has collected the harbour dues, and the custom-house officers have ascertained that no wine or spirits are on board, or have levied that single tax, the government is satisfied, and no further impediments exist. The Jersey people could not possibly stand more in need of hemp than the English. Without rigging for her merchant-ships, England is impoverished: without cables and sails for her vessels of war, she is defenceless. How did she then supply this great necessity? But little hemp is grown at home; and, in order to obtain more, government adopted the means precisely adapted to defeat the end. Instead of facilitating to the utmost the obtaining of an article from abroad which is deficient at home, difficulties were thrown in the way of getting it from abroad, in order to force the production at home: a very high duty was laid on imported hemp. This made it less expensive to buy sail-cloth and ropes ready made from abroad than to manufacture them at home; and thus our manufacturers were ruined. It also stimulated the use of iron cables, so that the government found that there is a slip between the cup and the lip,—between laying on this tax and receiving the produce. The result of the whole was that government derived little from the tax; our manufacturers could not make their business answer; and we employed foreigners to prepare our ropes for us, while those at home, who would do the work cheaper, were standing idle. If government would have admitted hemp free, the multitude who were standing idle, and the larger multitude who paid for the collecting of the tax and for the dearness of the article, would have been thankful to subscribe the 70,000*l.* which was all that found its way into the Treasury. It is but lately that the consequences of such a policy have been recognised by the government and the country, and the duty on undressed hemp repealed; but it is now fully acknowledged that the country need never have paid the high prices demanded for hemp manufactures from 1808 to 1814, or any of

the burdens which this absurd tax has imposed till now. It is to be hoped that this conviction will lead to the repeal of other taxes as bad in principle, and almost as mischievous in practice: but custom-house officers still interfere between the English builder and the timber of the Baltic, and demand so heavy a tax upon every cask of tallow or oil that is on its way to the soap-boiler as to involve hundreds or thousands in the factitious guilt of a breach of the revenue laws.

Aaron had a favourite phrase at his tongue's end, whenever he was out of his father's sight. Le Brocq had carried his authority over his son a great deal too far:—so far that Aaron was in a state of unremitting bondage to one person, while he was apt to carry his freedom to an extreme in every other presence. 'What is that to you?' was his invariable reply when questioned by sister, friend or stranger;—an expression which would never have occurred to him, if he had not been racked with questions by the only person whom he could not refuse to answer. His sisters were so well aware of his sensitiveness to the tone of interrogation that whatever was uncertain was put by them into a form of conjecture; and even Victorine appeared to be thinking aloud whenever she wanted to know anything which she believed her young master could tell.

Custom-house officers cannot be expected to show such consideration for individual peculiarities, and it would have been scarcely safe to have allowed Aaron to go down to an English port to transact business about hemp or tallow. Ladies going to France now find it vexatious to be asked, "What have you in that bag?" "What do you carry in this little box;" and gentlemen turn restive under the inquiry what fills out their pockets, and whether they carry anything in their boots. Such inquisition, intolerable as it is, is less vexatious by half than that which the English merchant, priding himself on the dignity of his vocation, has to undergo when the amount of his purchases, and the value of his merchandise have to be investigated, and made known to those who ought to have no concern in the matter, that they may watch whether he discharges his duty to the state. These sufferers may not say (what they are incessantly prompted to exclaim,)—"What is that to you?" they may not make as free as Aaron did on the quays of St. Heliers.

The comptroller accosted him with,

"Your concern is with her,—yonder,—I see."

"What's that to you?"

"Why, no more than that I can tell you, within a minute and a half, how soon she will be alongside the wharf. You won't have to wait long, I fancy; for there are half a score of people come in from the country at the first news of her being moored off the old castle. You must have found it a great vexation to be waiting for hemp when the time of the fishery was passing away."

"What's she?" inquired Aaron, pointing to a vessel which was making her way out of the harbour, before the anxious eyes of a group of men, now resting from the toil of putting the finishing stroke to her lading.

“What’s that to you?” replied the comptroller, smiling. “I see you do not like other people to take a fancy to your words. Well, then, she carries stone to the port of London; and a fine voyage she is likely to have with this wind:—a better one than the Riga vessels that have been in the Channel this fortnight, I fancy, and cannot get here. They will be all coming at once when you will want them less than you have done. But you have always a good market for cordage in England, I suppose.”

Aaron muttered that whether he sent his ropes to England or anywhere else, people in all places wanted cordage, and always would want it, he supposed.

“No doubt; and when one hears of young men’s sisters being seen turning the wheel in the rope-walk, and of young men themselves standing every evening by the poquelaye to look for ships that bring hemp, one can’t help, if one cares for the island, hoping that the manufacture is prospering.”

“Certainly; if one is thinking of the island. But what is to become of the island, if it is to be overrun with thieves? You heard of our being robbed last night.”

“Yes. Some London rogue that came by an oyster-boat, no doubt. What have you lost by him?”

“What’s that to you?”

“Why, really, Mr. Aaron, I don’t see how you are to find your property again, if you have an objection to say what you have lost. I must leave you to find the thief in your own way, and wish you good morning.”

“Well; but that is not what I meant to say,—if you think you can help me to the thief.”

“Nobody could, if many were to take up your way of speaking. Only conceive, now! ‘Pray, sir, have you any knowledge of the people that came by the Medway boats?’—‘What’s that to you?’ ‘Have you happened to see a blind man pass your way, Mr. So-and-so?’—‘What’s that to you?’ ‘Where was it — ?’ ”

Aaron half-laughed, and wished people would never be tiresome with their questions, and then —

“And then you would not make it a great mystery whether the thief took two pairs of stockings or six. Well, if I find Mr. Stephen and his booty in an empty wine-cask, I will make bold to let you know, if you will only allow me to ask whether the property belongs to you.”

Aaron gravely thanked him, when the comptroller began saying one thing more before they separated.

“Just bear this hint in mind, Mr. Aaron. Don’t be tempted to go and follow any business in England, till you have taken as great a fancy for being questioned as you have now taken against it. This is the country for you,—where nobody fingers your

tow, or counts your strands, or measures your cables. Don't be persuaded to go and live in England."

Aaron stared. He had never had a thought of even crossing to England for a week's pleasure. Had his companion heard of any scheme — ? What could put it into his head to offer such a caution?

"What's that to you?" answered the comptroller, laughing as he retreated. "Only mind what I say."

Aaron was not fond of minding what anybody said. He had had enough of that kind of observance enforced by his father. He looked dogged; and if any one had on the spot offered him a passage to England, he would probably have gone, at all hazards.

The fancy possessed him all day. While engaged in the purchase of his hemp, he made inquiries of the Russians whether they had been in England, and how they were treated there, and after what fashion purchases of hemp were made in the ports. He was in the midst of a reverie, deciding that it could be no more really necessary to answer impertinent questions in England than anywhere else, when he was stopped on his way out of town by an officer of justice who wanted a description of Stephen's costume; and then by a housewife who had a mysteriously-obtained cap to show, which she supposed might be one of the missing stock. Over hill and over dale he jogged and jolted, letting his horse carry the cart after its own fancy, while he reviewed in his mind all the trades and professions he had heard of as being practised in England; and recalled the countenances of two Isle of Wight men who had looked far from being harassed to death. He was pretty sure it must be very possible for him to live in England: and what the comptroller could mean by so earnest a caution, given at this very time, he could not imagine.

The first person he saw on his arrival in the neighbourhood of home was Victorine. She was awaiting him on the orchard bank; and very sorry she was that she could venture no further on the road by which he was to approach; but the thief of the preceding night was as a lion in the path. No one of the women had this day gone out of screaming distance; and it was rather a stretch of boldness to have attained the orchard bank. There had been terrors to be sustained;—a toad had made the grass move in one place; and a large black bird, (Victorine did not look again to see of what species,) had rustled in the hedge, and flown out before her eyes; and a gruff voice had been overheard in the ditch on the other side;—a voice which made her heart beat so that she could hear nothing else, or she would soon have discovered that it was the grunting old sow. The greatness of the occasion alone enabled her to take her stand, notwithstanding all these alarms.

"Mr. Aaron," cried she, "there is news at home. Mr. Aaron, the uncle is dead."

"What uncle? Whose uncle? Our uncle? What uncle?"

"Uncle Anthony is dead. I thought I would tell you, sir; lest you should see the mother first, and fear something worse. Have you got news of our caps?"

Aaron did not answer the last question, he was so busy trying to remember who uncle Anthony was. He remembered having heard the name in childhood, and believed that the person it belonged to lived somewhere a great way off; but no passing thought of either name or person had been in his mind for so many years, that he was ill-prepared to take the news as it seemed to be expected that he should.

He found his mother moving about with a countenance of the deepest solemnity, and the same step that she would have used in a sickroom. Le Brocq was quiet and thoughtful, and Malet evidently in gay spirits.

“We have had a great loss, Aaron,” declared the mother. “You remember our uncle Anthony.”

“Did I ever see him, mother?”

He was told that this was a very ungrateful question, for that uncle Anthony had been his godfather. When it pleased God to send afflictions, it became people to be more sensible of them than Aaron seemed to be. By way of setting an example, Mrs. Le Brocq gave all the house-business in charge to Victorine, and sat down with her knitting to sigh very heavily, and look up reproachfully as often as any one spoke. Anna saw Aaron’s perplexity, and its near approach to a sulky fit, and found an opportunity of whispering a little desirable information.

“Uncle Anthony was father’s uncle, and he gave mother a tea-chest when she married; and he was your godfather, and lived near London; and he wants us to go and live there now.”

“But I thought he was dead.”

“So he is: but he left a letter, which I suppose father will tell you about. I am afraid we do not know how to take this dispensation as we ought: but pray God those may be supported that will miss him more than we can!”

“What does father look so grave for? Is it sorrow? or is he thinking of London?”

“Charles let drop that he should like to go to London; and he says ’tis like a providence, after what passed last night. Such a business offered! and so pressing! Father is turning it over, perhaps.”

“Why for Charles more than me? Everybody is thought of before me.”

“You would not have thought so if you had known how father was calling for you, three or four times before you came home. Whatever he may be thinking, he is not forgetting you.—But, Aaron, don’t be eager after changes. We are over-apt to like changes; but see the grave faces that we have had since this time yesterday, when our changes began!”

A change was meanwhile working to which Anna could not object, any more than her brother. Her father’s heart was opening towards Aaron under the influence of a strong

excitement. He held out the letter at arm's length, with the encouraging command, "Read that." Aaron read as follows:—

"Dear Nephew—The reason why you have never heard from me for these seventeen years past is because I had a son and daughter of my own, as you know, to care for; and you were too far off to do me any good in the way of attention, which I always remembered in your favour when in want of it when my son turned disobedient. Also I remembered the overalls your wife knitted for me, and always determined you should hear of them again, sooner or later. But I had no mind to give up my business to anybody else before I had done with it myself; and for this same reason, though I am writing this letter now, I don't mean that you should have it till after my death. Never mind my missing being thanked by you! I can fancy all you would say very well, and set it down to your credit.

"You are to come and take my business, instead of living in your outlandish place any longer, which is only a place for such as are half French in their hearts,—confound them! You have nothing like this Lambeth neighbourhood, let me tell you; and the sooner you come and see, the better. Indeed, the business can't wait long for a master, though Studley will do very well to take care of it for the few weeks after my burial till you come. But make haste, lest you miss more than you think for. There is little in the pottery business that you may not learn, and teach your little boy after you, with Studley to help you: and it is a very pretty concern, and one which it is a mystery to me that my son should have sneezed at, and gone abroad, I do believe to get away from me, where he is doing very well, they say, with his wife and family in America; and so nobody can allege I do an unkind thing in showing my displeasure against him by leaving my business to one who never disobeyed me. My daughter, I should have said, died twelve years ago, and is buried in the same churchyard with my wife.

"You may be thankful that I have lived to this time to get up a pretty business for you. The stone pottery is a very different affair now from what it was when I first came into it, forty years ago. Not but that it was in one respect more flourishing twenty years ago than it is now;—viz., in soda-water bottles, of which we used to send out a great number till cut out in that respect by the glass, which is more secure of being clean, they say, and does not sweat, as stone used to do, though we have now cured the sweating. It is a pity, too, that glass is preferred for beer that is sent abroad. I don't mean ginger beer or spruce beer, both which are bottled in stone, as being less apt to burst; and the people in Van Diemen's Land and other foreign parts are very fond of such brisk drinks, as you will find to your profit. We made 130 cwt. with E X upon them last year. But this is a poor test, since a bare twelfth of our article is dutypaid. We send as many figured jugs to Ireland as ever; and what we make for ink and blacking is prodigious. There is an increase in spirit casks and large oil bottles; and the state of chemicals has improved in our favour since I took the business; so that I should scarcely have believed then what I should some time sell to chemists, and also for filtering. So here, you see, is a pretty sort of business, and only, I assure you, ten or eleven to divide it among them in London, and only sixty-nine in all England: and if prices have come down somewhat, it is quite as much because the clay can be got cheaper, and coals are lower, as on account of the meddling of the glass-bottle makers,—which you will perhaps wonder at my owning, considering what a grudge

we owe these last: but I am for fair play on all occasions. So now you know what you have to expect, except about the house. It is a pretty pleasant house, joining the pottery, and opening into the yard: and there being only outhouses behind for some way, it is what I call airy; and the furniture you will find just as I leave it. So all will be ready for you to come directly.

“I think this is all at present. You may expect me to say something serious, as people generally do when they are settling their affairs to leave the world. But I am not particularly ill, though I have taken this opportunity of writing this letter, and finished my 75th year yesterday; and those things come time enough when the time comes: and my business now is, being of sound mind, to arrange matters for you, in case of my being cut off suddenly. So I shall just leave this open, in case of having anything to add at any future time.”

It appeared that nothing had occurred to be added in any future time, for this was all. Anna was sorry for it. While her father was talking about the letter being that of a good, kind, old soul, she was turning it round to find in some of its odd corners some word of relenting towards his disobedient son. Aaron waited in silence an intimation that Malet was to be presented with this “pretty business” in a country where people paid the merest trifles in taxes, and without being aware of it. The idea had even struck him that he would work upon Malet to let him become a partner, and thus free himself from his father’s strict rule, and settle himself where, as he grew older, no one would make him pay down money for the use of the State.

Malet looked blank when Le Brocq announced his intention of going to St. Heliers tomorrow, to inquire about a passage for England. The young man was asked the cause of his surprise. Why should any time be lost?

“Do you mean to go?” asked all the family.

Certainly. What else should he do? Malet should rent the farm, and take Aaron’s rope-walk, if he would. Aaron would be wanted at the pottery. Malet would fain have discovered that he should be wanted too. No one who had seen and heard Stephen thought anything so hard as to have to live in Jersey, when there was such a place as England to go to. Even with the certainty before them of being able to marry immediately, Malet and Louise looked grave. Any one would have thought that their marriage had been put off for a twelvemonth at least.

“You shall have the farm at a reasonable rate, in consideration of its being a place for my wife and Anna to come back to, if anything should happen to me before I have settled well in this business in London. You shall have the six acres for 40*l.*, and no other charges but for the orchard; and you shall be married directly, that we may be gone. We will settle about Aaron’s rope-walk to-morrow, when I have questioned him a little more about it.”

Aaron did not slip away, as he usually did when there was talk of questioning. He was too happy in the prospect of living in England to throw any impediment in the way of getting rid of his rope-walk.

“And what are we to pay for the orchard, pray?” asked Louise, repiningly. “I’m sure I shall have no time to make cider, if you all go away and leave me.”

“Victorine will stay; and that will be just so much more help than your mother had when we married,” replied Le Brocq. “I shall not ask above 3*l.* an acre for the orchards, and cider enough for our own drinking, which I expect you will send us every year.”

“Anna and I shall make our own cider, I suppose,” declared Mrs. Le Brocq, forgetting her solemnity in the interest of the topic. “It will be a long way to send cider.”

Not farther than cider was sent every season, her husband replied; and he doubted whether it would be quite convenient to make cider on the premises of a Lambeth pottery; but as Mrs. Le Brocq was sure that, wherever she went, she should have an orchard at the back of the house, the point was left to be determined after their arrival.

There must now be entire silence, for the farmer was about to study over again the letter from uncle Anthony’s lawyer in which the foregoing epistle was enclosed. Louise therefore withdrew to meditate over her milk-pail, and Anna to take in the linen from the green bank, lest there should be a further theft this night. As she passed the hydrangeas at the door, and the flowering myrtles that half-concealed the paling, she felt sad at the prospect of leaving them;—at the prospect of leaving these particular hydrangeas and myrtles, not of quitting the region of flowers; for she never doubted there being a green path to the house in Lambeth, and a vine growing up to the thatch, and blossoming shrubs clustering on every side. She hoped they should all be happier when they were rich; but she could scarcely see how; for Louise must be left behind, and Victorine; and her mother’s head-ach and pain in the shoulder might perhaps continue, however rich they might be. But if Aaron should look lighter, and father be as kind to him as to Louise and herself, they should certainly be all much happier; and perhaps the being rich might bring this about. At any rate, it was God that raised up as well as brought low; and so all must be right: but this was a dear place to be obliged to leave. Aaron silently devoured his mess of conger eel, stewed with milk and young green peas, and grew in his own estimation every moment. When Victorine had done serving him, she placed herself where she might watch the family party, and perhaps discover what made her mistress sigh as she had never heard her sigh since the late king died.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter III.

LIFE IN LAMBETH.

It is needless to explain that there were neither myrtles nor vines about the pottery-house. Not that there was any deficiency of scent around the dwelling. A soap manufactory near obviated every charge of this kind. It had given out its odours in full power at the moment of the Le Brocqs' first approach to their new abode, and had greeted them just when they paused to admire the symbols which were erected on their pottery wall. It was by uncle Anthony's taste that the establishment bore this refined character. It was he who had mounted a huge filterer on one angle; and on another a ladle which seemed made to fish up Truth out of a well. Uncle Anthony had done much. Would he had done one thing more!—removed from the neighbourhood of the soap manufactory, or got it removed by indicting it as a nuisance. But he had lived for fifty years on good terms with this establishment, and never dreamt of hurting it. Indeed, when he had been persuaded, on rare occasions, to give himself a day's airing at Hornsey, he relished the atmosphere of his native street on his return, as the fuller's heart leaps at the sight of the dust about his mill, and the weaver's at the sound of the click-clack of his loom. Mrs. Le Brocq did not take it so easily, nor believe what she was told of the certainty that she would enjoy the nuisance in time, as much as her neighbours. Anna felt it a sad addition to the excitements under which she had to labour from dawn till night. Every morning she was startled from sleep by the workmen knocking at the gate of the yard; and then came the peevish bell of the dustman, and then a gradual increase of street noises. If it rained, the sprinklings of white earth in the yard became mud; if the sun shone in, the dust danced thick in its beams, and she felt as if she drew it in with every breath. At her former home, little dust was to be seen, as everything was green around, except the gravelly lane; but here no efforts to keep the furniture in a seemly state availed anything. It would have been as easy to parry one of the plagues of Egypt. There was a good deal to be admired, however, when it was not boiling day at the soapery, or when the wind was south. The river, as seen from the wharf behind the pottery, was not so fine, she thought, as the channel between Jersey and France; but the bridge was very grand, and nothing could be more beautiful than her father's finely arranged stock of stone-ware. Mr. Studley, the foreman, had assured her that the process of the manufacture was in some parts very elegant; but her father would not let her see it till Aaron should be competent to the exhibition, on some holiday, or other occasion when the men should be absent. Through the stock-room, however, she was allowed to range; and her awe of London, as a place of civilization and wealth, was much increased by what she saw there;—such beautiful jars and pitchers, and so enormous a congregation of blacking bottles! Thither she carried her knitting, when not wanted in kitchen or parlour. She thought she must leave off knitting, as her mother could do all that was now required. Nobody seemed to wear knitted smallclothes or petticoats in London, nor even shawls. If it was really true that she must no longer make her father's and Aaron's coats, she feared she should want occupation: but it was difficult to credit that in a fine country like England the men would condescend to such womanish work as

tailoring. She had no doubt she should find this to be a joke upon her, as a new comer. She had, indeed, seen a young man sitting upon a table, and doing tailor's work; but he was very small and pale, and most likely permitted to do this because he was fit for nothing else.

While deep in thought over her work, she was planning how to make her mother more comfortable than she could possibly be at present. Mrs. Le Brocq could not live without apples, and was very much discomposed at having to purchase them; and when she went to the shop, or stepped out after a fruit-woman in the street, the neighbours invariably followed to stare at her costume. The butcher had given out that the new family were preciously stingy people, eating meat only once or twice a week, which was a sin and shame in the owners of a pottery. Mr. Studley cast a look of disgust at her, the only time he had entered the house,—which happened precisely at the moment when the dinner of lard and cabbage soup was being served up. If Mrs. Le Brocq could not be made more popular in the neighbourhood, it was to be feared that the possession of a pottery would not insure perfect happiness to the family.

How different from Studley had been another visitor who entered at a similar important point of time! "A gentleman," who did not declare his name, called to speak to Mr. Le Brocq, a few days after his arrival, and walked in, as a matter of course, without waiting to hear whether the person he sought was at home. He uttered a cry of delight at the spectacle of the soup, and kissed Mrs. Le Brocq and her daughter, in sign of being a countryman. Before he could be asked, he drew a chair, rubbed his hands, and sang a verse of a song in the French of the island,—the language which it refreshed their ears to hear. He had not done when Le Brocq came in, expecting to find a customer for his stoneware rather than his dinner.

"Ha! countryman!" cried the stranger. "Don't try to remember me. For my own sake, don't try to remember me. There's no use in looking back too far, when all is done; but I could not slink away when once I had seen the hem of your wife's Jersey petticoat. My name is Durell: there is no occasion to remind us all that you have heard it before."

Mr. Le Brocq looked grave. A farmer, of the name of Durell, had committed an assault on the King's highway, in the neighbourhood of Gorey, and had anticipated his sentence of banishment by making off in a fishing-boat, within an hour of the information being laid against him. Every one had been sorry for the offender, who was known to be of a passionate temper, and to have received such provocation as would have gone far to justify him. Every one was sorry that he had precipitately given up his pretty farm, and compelled his wife and child to wander after him to another land; but Le Brocq now wished to have some evidence of the respectability of Durell, before he admitted him as a guest on terms of familiarity.

"You should have such a love of country as mine, man, and then you would not look so cold upon me," cried Durell. "If you knew how my heart longs for a word about the deep shady lanes, and those blessed little coves, where the sea comes to kiss one's feet, and slips away again! I have not seen what I call a dell any where else; and the

pastures, with a green that makes one's eyes water! Heaven keep them so! And how are they?"

"Did you come to hear this sort of news?" Le Brocq inquired.

"The devil take what I came for! that will do afterwards. Can't you tell me whether the doves coo as they used to do when the wind dropped? For the soul of me, I can't believe you are a Jerseyman! If I had not thrown open my doors wider to poor Stephen, I should have doubted my being a Jerseyman myself."

"Poor who?" inquired Le Brocq, hoping to obtain something in the form of a reference.

"A poor helpless body that lives with me, and tells me every night what makes me dream that I am leaning against a mossy stone gate-post, or throwing pebbles into the ivy to bring out the birdies. You shall see him; and we will make ourselves all of a company."

Le Brocq was going to rebuke this familiarity, when Studley put his head in, and respectfully told Durell that all was ready for him when he pleased to come. Durell's air was immediately as sober and business-like as that of Studley.

"I believe," said he, "you have not told your principal what I am here for. Ay, you think he must know by instinct; but let me tell you that no more is heard of the excise in Jersey than there is here of knit small-clothes. Had he told you to expect me?" he inquired of Le Brocq.

"He said something yesterday about sending a notice to the excise; but I do not rightly see what the excise has to do with my manufacture."

"That you shall see presently. We have only to visit you once a day, and to see your bottles come out of the furnace, and make you count and weigh them, if we choose, and measure them across the neck, to see if they are of the legal size, and—"

"What is all that to you?" cried Aaron, who had just entered.

"In order to determine the payment we are to take from you."

"Payment! What payment? People are to pay us for our bottles, I suppose, and not we them, or I see little use in making bottles. What payment can you mean?"

"The excise duty,—the tax on home manufactures. In your case—"

"But we were told that the people in England paid no tax, except a mere trifle that they give without knowing it. Father, did not you understand that the English pay no tax?"

"That is a little mistake," averred Durell. "Their paying without knowing it is partly true. What you are going to pay me, for instance, is not the same kind of contribution

as you have paid out of your own pocket in Jersey, when the States wanted to erect a new pier, or other public building. You will repay yourselves by putting such a price on your bottles as will defray the tax, besides yielding you a profit; and the buyers of your bottles will not know the amount they pay for the tax from that which buys the bottle. You advance the tax for them, that is all.”

“But that is very hard,” observed Aaron. “Why are we to be obliged to advance money for hundreds of people that we do not know or wish to serve?”

“Oh! you must pay yourselves by charging interest upon this advance. Studley will tell you that you clap on a little more still upon the price, as interest upon your advance.”

“Well, I think that is hard upon our customers, I must say. I don’t call it any favour to them to take their money in such a way, instead of giving them a choice whether they will pay directly, or wait awhile and pay the interest too.”

“The buyer of your bottles pays no more for interest than he gains in time. There is no cheat in making him pay interest upon this kind of loan, any more than upon other kinds of loans.”

“But there is a cheat in not letting him know how the matter stands, so that he may have a choice. It is like putting physic between bread and butter for a grown man, who had, perhaps, much rather swallow a pill of his own accord.”

“Well; every man has the power of looking between his bread and butter. Every buyer may know how much duty is paid upon any article he buys.”

“But he is not able to choose between the pill and the powder. If he won’t take the powder as it is spread, he must go without both physic and bread and butter.”

“And I am far from sure,” observed Le Brocq, “whether our customers be not cheated, after all. I was frightened enough when I came, as Studley knows, to find what wages we have to pay. I set down the concern as ruin when the first Saturday night came; and I like the plan but little better now I find that these high wages are paid, in the same manner as the tax and the interest, out of the price of the article. I believe that the high wages are owing to this very tax. I must think so, because our workmen are not nearly so well off with their high wages as our Jersey labourers with only half the sum.”

Mrs. Le Brocq wondered that English labourers used so many stone bottles as to make all this difference. Her husband explained that the same tax was laid on other articles, more used by labourers than stone bottles—on soap, and beer, and spirits, and tea. Now, if the tax made the articles on which the labourer subsists much more expensive than they would otherwise be, the labourer’s wages must be much higher to buy the same comforts than they would otherwise be; and the wages being high acts again on the price of the article made by the labourer; and so the buyer pays twice over, and everything is put out of its natural course.

Le Brocq heaved a deep sigh, which was echoed by his son. They had calculated, from the price of their wares, compared with the expense of production, that they should be abundantly rich in a year or two. They had been startled by the amount of wages; and now, when they found that the price of their bottles was also to cover the tax, and interest upon its advance, their golden visions began to melt into the twilight of doubt.

The first object now was to finish dinner, and go over the premises with the exciseman, to see what his visit was like. Durell declined all further hospitality on the present occasion, declaring, with a look of gravity very unlike what he wore when Studley came in, that though he had tasted a favourite old dish for once, to show his goodwill, it was but for once. He always avoided occasion of misinterpretation in his office, and should therefore desire his visits to be strictly confined to business. Considering how frequent they must be, it was necessary to come to an understanding from the beginning, especially with strangers who might not be aware of the strictness of the rules by which excise officers must be guided. He requested Mr. Le Brocq and all his family to take notice that it would be better to offer no kind of favour to him or his excise brethren, since none could be accepted.

“So we are to have the pleasure of seeing you often?” observed Le Brocq.

“You will see me often,—one or other of us every day; but I advise you not to call this a pleasure. It can never be a pleasure; but you may prevent its being a plague by letting us go and come, and by being perfectly correct in your conduct—Ah! I perceive you are offended at the word; but when you have lived here a few months longer, you will see that I mean nothing more than a friendly caution. Finish your dinner; and I will go with Studley, and learn what your people are doing.”

Aaron was on the point of saying once more, “What’s that to you?” but his father desired him to dispatch his meal, and follow as soon as he could, to take a lesson in excise visitations.

“You may wonder now that you have not seen us before,” observed Durell to Le Brocq, as they passed into the manufactory; but your predecessor was on very good terms with us; and, from his long connexion with us, could be trusted to send for us on all proper occasions, so as to save himself from a daily visitation; and the same favour was continued to Studley till we found that the management had gone into other hands. You cannot do better than follow his advice. He will inform you of all that is necessary in your dealings with us. Ho! ho! what a brickmaking here is! For how many thousand are you going to account to us, Studley?”

“Sir, we do not sell bricks,” protested Le Brocq.

“Nor tiles. But those tiles that are now burning in every one of your furnaces would have paid tax a few months ago.”

“What! tiles that are used only for our ware to stand upon while it is burning! Bless me! are all these charges to be paid by the article when sold? Our bottles may well be called dear.”

“Though I fancy you take a little off the price of the bottles, and put it upon the jars which are not taxed. Hey?”

Studley observed that this was a very fair way of defeating the intentions of the glass-manufacturers, to whose jealousy it was owing that stone bottles were taxed at all.

Le Brocq was quite out of humour at being threatened with a charge of *5s. 10d.* a thousand for his bricks. Was he to be expected to buy bricks to build that upper story, while he had the clay on his premises? He might do which he pleased, he was told: he was to pay the duty either way,—in the price of bought bricks, or into the exciseman’s hand.

“By the way,” observed Durell, “that new upper story is not entered. How comes that?”

“We keep that for articles that are not exciseable,” answered Studley, “You have no concern with that floor. There is not an exciseable article in it.”

“Take care that there never is, then. You may find that your walls have tongues, if you give them anything to tell. You know, friend,” turning to Le Brocq, “that for each and every of premises not entered according to law, there is a heavy penalty. If you did not know it before, you know it now; and heaven help you to keep out of my hands! Ah! here are your tiles!—pitiful things to pay tax upon, indeed. I am glad to leave you to your own devices about that article.”

Studley looked very impatient while the visiter went on talking, and turning over the burnt tiles. When Durell next entered a kiln that was cooling, and looked round at the streaks of glazing that the salt had left upon the sides, and afterwards descended to the place where the clay was being milled, and watered, and trodden, and conversed with the blind horse, and joked with the boys, the foreman thought it time to speak out.

“Pray, sir, do you know how long we have been waiting for you? Do you please that we should proceed without you?”

“By no means. Are you going to fill the kiln, or draw?”

“You seem to forget our notice, sir. We drew five hours ago; and your officer weighed the wares in due form. They are standing now for you to weigh; and if you keep us here to the end of the six hours, it will be too late to pack them off by the present opportunity. Another half-hour is our last chance this week. I told you so before, sir,” continued the vexed foreman, following as Durell skipped up the stairs, taking two at a time. “If I told you once, I told you thrice; but that stinking hotch-potch put everything else out of your head, I think.”

“You will pack off the larger articles, I suppose, Studley,” observed Le Brocq, “whether the bottles are ready or not? You will get off all but the exciseable articles to-night?”

Studley explained that the bottles were to be packed in between the larger articles, as in the kiln, thus saving carriage in the one case as they saved fuel in the other. If the officers meant to grow very strict just now, it might become necessary to have a separate kiln for burning, and a separate package, rather than keep eleven twelfths of the manufacture waiting for the rites to be performed on the exciseable portion.

The weighing was more a matter of show than use; for Durell was anxious not to prevent the departure of the goods. He even tried his hand at packing, and was not out of humour when plainly told that they could do better without him. Studley hinted that he might be more acceptable among the ladies, who had probably something to tell him about Jersey cows and orchards; but Durell took his stand near a boy who was beginning the practice of his art. The exciseman crossed his arms, and leaned against the wall while watching and commenting upon the progress of the lad, in shaping his little pots upon the wheel.

“Very fair! very fair, lad! Round it,—with a delicate rounding,—and coax it,—and bulge it,—and draw it narrow. ’Tis as if it made itself, or grew with a touch of magic. Pshaw! you have brought it off awry. ’Tis but a slovenly piece, after all. I should think myself a clever fellow, too, if I could come as near the mark as that. You are a lucky one to have that kind of work under your hands.”

The boy looked up with an intelligent smile. He had lately been promoted from turning the lathe, and the sense of his new dignity shone in his countenance as the gentleman looked on. The gentleman still soliloquized.

“Young thoughtless things like you see no more in such occupation than making so much clay into so many pots, for so much wages; and, perhaps, the pride of being a skilled workman. But those that have spent their first years in the fields, and have wandered about the world since, see much blessing to you in having beauty before your eyes, and growing up under your hands. ’Tis well for you that there is something to keep you fresh in all the dust of this place, and all the glare and noise of the street. The spirit of beauty that hung the cloud curtains of God’s throne may look bright down upon you, even here. Blessings on her, and Him that made her!”

The boy’s rising colour seemed to show that he heard and partly understood, though he proceeded diligently with his work.

“Did you ever go into the country, lad?” inquired Durell. “Did you ever see a green field?”

“Not he, I’ll be bound,” answered the little boy at the neighbouring lathe, who became impatient to be noticed. “My father took me to Tottenham once, and I had some ale; but *his* mother never lets him go anywhere.”

“She does,” asserted Brennan, turning red again. “She lets me stay out on the wharf till bed-time; and when I got a new coat given me, she went all the way into the Park with me, one Sunday afternoon.”

“You saw some green grass, there?”

“Yes, Sir, and the swans.”

“And plenty of ducks?”

“I did not care so much about them,—just like soda-water bottles with wings, when they are flying. But I made a swan, sir, when I came back.”

“What do you do out on the wharf till bedtime?”

“Look at the boats passing under the bridge, sir. And there are heaps of things that look better as it grows dark.”

“What sort of things?”

“Baskets of things on the wharf, heaped up; and barrows and packages—”

The boy at the lathe interrupted his companion by laying an information against him. There was not such a thing as a bit of slate ever found upon the wharf that was not covered over with Brennan’s drawings of barrows, and boats, and baskets, and sometimes Mr. Studley’s greyhound.

“I made a greyhound,” observed Brennan, looking up; “and when it was baked, Mr. Studley knew it for his own.”

“When shall you have a new coat again?” asked Durell. “Confound the question! just as if we could not get you a coat among us! You shall go to a place, Brennan,—I will take you to a place where you will see something prettier than that pitcher you seem to be admiring so much;—something that I think you will like better than green fields.”

“On a Sunday, sir?”

“No; I believe not. Studley! The British Museum is not open on a Sunday, is it?—No, boy; it must be some other day.”

“But I can’t go any other day,” said the boy mournfully.

“O yes; cursed be he that shuts out such as you from feeding your genius,—from adoring God in using his gifts—”

“Perhaps you would ask for a part holiday, sir?” suggested the boy.

“Will I? Ay—” But Durell remembered that he was an exciseman, and must not ask favours. In a cooler tone, he promised the boy to remember him; and desired that the greyhound and the swan might be ready for exhibition the next time he came. He left the boy happy in devising an opportunity for asking some of the wise men about the pottery what the British Museum was. The information gleaned in the course of a week did not give him any clear comprehension of what he should see that he should like better than green fields. “There’s a monster of a wild beast on the stair, as I’ve heard,” said one. “There’s a power of stones, laid out in rows, as my own eyes saw,” attested another. “Gold and precious stones! Lord bless ye! nothing like it. Only what you may pick up in the road any day.” “You forget the skin of the head with the hair on it,” observed another. “A wild man’s hair and the skin of his head.” The boy could not conceive how any of these things could be prettier than swan or greyhound. He could only wonder whether the gentleman was in earnest about giving him a new coat, and would remember to take him to that odd place.

The ware was precisely in time for the waggon. It was as near missing as possible; and while Le Brocq wiped his brows after his toil and hurry, he looked reproachfully at Durell. He found that no farming labours were so fatiguing as waiting the pleasure of an exciseman, in the heat and dust of a pottery.

“You look at me,” observed Durell. “You wish me a hundred miles off, I see: but I can’t help the system; and I tell you, you are better off than many of your neighbours. Only one-twelfth of your manufacture is exciseable, and—”

“That is the very thing I complain of,” said Le Brocq. “To be worried and watched for such a little matter!”

“I think it our business to complain of that,” replied Durell. “There is some satisfaction in one’s supervision when one collects enough to make it worth while—a hundred pounds or two. But it makes us feel like so many fools to be trudging here, and riding there, to collect less than would mend our shoes or feed our horses. In your business, there are but nine men that pay more than a hundred a-year in duty; and of that, they get back a third part when they export.”

“No more than nine?”

“In all England; and seven pay less than 1*l.* a-year. Here are we bound to visit their potteries every day, and as much oftener as they choose to call us, to collect fifteen-pence, or seven shillings and sixpence, or a guinea a-year! ’Tis a farce.”

“I should think these people would pay three times the sum to have you keep off their premises, every day of the year; and that would save your salary;—for I suppose you have one.”

“To be sure; and hundreds more of us. How would you have the whole kingdom watched,—every maker of glass, and soap, and beer, of bricks, and paper, and starch, and spirits,—every grower of hops,—every maltster and seller of tea and sweet wines and hides,—how would you have all these people watched and made to pay their fines

and forfeitures, without an army of excisemen? and who will be an exciseman without pay? You may talk of the church, (heaven preserve it!) but I know one thing like it. The church has its hierarchy,—its gradation from the archbishop to the curate, all salaried. The excise has its hierarchy, too,—from the gentlemen that sit as judges in the court, with their messengers always in waiting, down to the poor devils that are for ever tramping in the outrides and footwalks.”

Le Brocq would not hear another word in the way of comparison of a hierarchy which existed for the purpose of supplying the people with religious aids, and one which levied a most vexatious tax. Durell could not refrain from going on to magnify the body to which he belonged. He told of the fifty-six collections into which England and Wales are divided; and the subdivision of these into districts, each with its supervisor; and the further division into outrides and footwalks, with a gauger or surveyor in each;—as elaborate a spy-system, at the utmost possible cost, as had ever been invented, his Jersey friend thought.

“By no means,” protested Durell. “The Customs beat us in expense, in more ways than one. In one respect only, the difference is more than 180,000*l.* We excisemen can live in houses that were built for other people: but the coastguard must have cottages for themselves alone; and this 180,000*l.* is what they cost. And then, if we have excise duties that yield less than any customs, they have a vast number more that yield but little. When 566 articles pay customs duties, and 510 of them yield under 10,000*l.* a-year, the expense must be greater in proportion to the gain than in any folly that the excise can practise.”

“They are not quite foolish enough yet, I suppose, to interfere with an entire branch of trade, for the sake of raising a few shillings or pounds here and there?”

“The two are pretty much on a par there. If we plague all the stone-bottle makers in England for the sake of little more than 3000*l.* a-year, our brethren of the Customs pry into all the cordage that comes into the kingdom for the sake of less than 150*l.*”

Aaron could speak to the annoyance of having his cordage taxed at the custom-house on the south coast, when he had two or three times wished to sell in England such produce of his rope-walk as was not wanted in Jersey. Yet, as a Channel Island man, he had been treated leniently; being charged no more duty than would countervail what the English had paid in tax before they could bring their article into the market.

“Well; I am gone,” said Durell. “I only stayed to show you Jerseymen that we are not quite the worst set of tax-gatherers in the world. If you are willing to be on good terms, so are we: but I must tell you, Mr. Aaron, that it is not every man of our tribe that would bear to be scowled at, as you have scowled at me to-day; nor could I always bear it myself: for I do not boast of my temper. If you will consider your interest—”

“What’s that to you?”

“Very true: so good bye till to-morrow. If you should want me sooner, it may give you the least trouble to send to Finch’s glass-house, near at hand. I am going there now; and one or other of us will be on the premises till night. I wish you joy of that lad Brennan. If you make the most of him, you may find yourselves in luck. Good day.”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter IV.

THE PHENOMENON AGAIN.

Mrs. Durell was the only acquaintance Anna wished to have in the neighbourhood of her new home. From what Durell had dropped about her, and from her being a native of Jersey, it seemed desirable that the women of Le Brocq's family should know her. They gave broad hints to this effect; and Durell frequently promised that his wife should come and offer neighbourly assistance to the strangers: but she never came.

This neglect could not appear wonderful to any one who knew the parties. Durell projected more achievements for his wife than she could have executed if he had himself imposed no toils and cares upon her: and, besides, she had long learned to distrust his opinions of new people, and to dread his introductions to strangers; and for his sake as much as her own, she deferred to the last moment the forming of any new connexions, even of common acquaintanceship. She never reminded him, otherwise than by distant allusion, of the delightful family whom he had bidden her receive as friends, not thinking of doubting their honour because some mystery hung about them,—the family of dear friends who were afterwards all hanged or transported for coining. She never spoke of the runaway apprentice who had been housed by them that he might have the advantage of a fair trial on the stage, and who disappeared with his host's best suit of clothes, with which to figure on some other stage. She allowed her husband to forget the scrape she had been brought into when taken up as a receiver of stolen goods, because she had been daily seen in company with the gipsies in whose society he delighted. She did not trouble him by a recurrence to past misfortunes; but she naturally grew more and more careful to avoid any future ones. On the present occasion, she held back, partly with the desire that something should be ascertained respecting the character of the Le Brocqs before she involved herself with them, and partly that her husband's quarter's salary might be in the purse before she was called upon to exercise hospitality. As often as Durell extolled Anna as the sweetest and softest of maidens, with a cheek which shamed the report that the lasses of a Jersey farm-house blush yellow, and an eye whose timid glance never fell before another, the wife assured herself that she should only see one more of the multitude of divinities who had caught her husband's fancy without impairing his constancy to her. As often as he told her what she lost in not witnessing the initiation of Le Brocq and his partner into life in Lambeth, she felt that she could wait for the spectacle of their peculiarities till she wanted that variety at home which her husband's caprices incessantly provided for her.

She was glad that his employment took him abroad during the early part of the day, that he might escape witnessing the toils which he imposed upon her. One morning, for instance, when she had evaded his question whether she would go that day to see Mrs. Le Brocq and the blessed Anna, she had to assist her maid in baking an extempore batch of bread, because one hearty person after another had been invited in, the night before, who had eaten up warm all that had just come out of the oven. An

array of glasses, with remains of spirit and water, stood to be rinsed and put away. His coat lay craving mending in the flap, which had been almost torn off by the snappish dog, brought home because he thought it had lost itself. A beautiful piece of French china was to be put together again, if possible, the child having broken it after warnings duly repeated. Nobody could be more sorry for the disaster than Durell himself. He seemed ready to weep over his mother's favourite bowl; but he really did not suppose the child would have let it down, and he had not the heart to take away any beautiful thing from before its eyes. It might please Heaven some day to take away the child's eyesight, and then who would think of the china being broken, while in the sufferer's mind it remained entire, an additional form of grace. It was impossible to dispute this reasoning while such a sufferer sat in the chimney-corner; and the bowl was carefully laid aside to be mended.

"Mother," said Mary, "do let me take my work into the parlour. I can stitch and wait upon Stephen too."

"Stay where you are, my dear. Jack can wait upon Stephen. If you finish your wrist-band in half an hour, you shall help to mend the bowl."

Mary knew there was no use in repeating her request. She could only sigh when she heard Jack's bursts of laughter at Stephen's droll faces, and wish that Stephen would come into the kitchen, and make faces there. When Stephen began to sing, all went well; for he could be heard, not only in the kitchen, but across the street. Some time after the song had come to an end, when two inches of stitching still remained to be done, Mary heard a tinkling among the unwashed glasses, and looked up.

"O, mother," cried she, "there's Jack draining the glasses!"

The little fellow explained that it was in behalf of Stephen, who had asked for these remains of spirit and water, because he was dry with singing. Mrs. Durell shook the flour from her hands, filled a fresh glass of spirit and water, and carried it herself to Stephen, requesting him to be so kind as not to offer a drop to the child. If he would call when he had done his glass, Jack should return to wait upon him. She meantime encouraged the boy to talk to her, in order to prevent his stealing back to Stephen before he was called. Jack was already as like his father as an infant can be to a grown man; and it was undesirable to give him any pleasant associations with a dram. Jack began with his usual question,

"Why can't Stephen see?"

He had been told by the maid that it was because Stephen had no eyes; and he wanted to see whether this would be the reply now given. His mother told him that Stephen's eyes were not like other people's. Jack was now baffled. He had prepared his answer,—that Stephen had two eyes, for he had walked round Stephen and counted his eyes.

"But," said he, "if his eyes are not like ours, how did he see Betty just going to let down the milk?"

“He never did, my dear. He never sees anything.”

“O, but he did: for he pulled away his coat tail, for fear the milk should fall upon it. Besides, he has two eyes, for I saw them myself.”

Whether Stephen’s ears were as serviceable as his eyes were the contrary, may be left to conjecture: but, before Mrs. Durell could question the child as to what he meant about the milk, Stephen was groping his way into the kitchen, and jokingly asking whether he could not assist in the baking. He had kneaded bread in his day, he said, and no one was more fond of the steams of the oven. He and Jack were presently busy with blind-man’s-buff, while Mary made a finish to her wrist-band with terrible long stitches, in order to put away everything that might be knocked down, and join in the sport, till mother should be ready to mend the china.

While she stood breathless to see what would become of Jack, now penned in a corner, stifling his screams and stamping, as Stephen’s broad hands seemed descending on his head, a tap at the door was heard, and Mary was desired to open it. As Anna stepped in, with a gentle inquiry whether she might speak with Mrs. Durell, Jack had an unexpected escape. Stephen relinquished his search in the corner, and slipped cleverly into the back parlour to search for his victim, though the child shouted,

“I am not there, Stephen: indeed I am not there. I am here.”

Mary pushed the noisy child into the parlour, and shut the door, that her mother might be able to hear what the visitor had to say.

“I hope you will not take it amiss that I came, Mrs. Durell; but Mr. Durell told us we might ask you anything we wanted, as strangers, to know. Our name is Le Brocq.”

“A name I know very well, through my husband. Pray sit down, and tell me if I can be of any service to you. Mary, set a chair.”

“Mr. Durell said you would come, or I should have come before,” observed Anna. “He thinks as we do, that God makes men love their country that they may help one another when they chance to be far away from it. That is,—I don’t know that we can help you; but you may like to talk about Jersey sometimes.”

“O, yes. We are very fond of thinking of Jersey. But can I assist you? As new-comers, you may want to be put in the way of something.”

“Why, we do; and my mother thought you would tell us where you buy your tea. We are sure they cheat us as new-comers, and I don’t know what we shall do if it goes on.”

“You do not expect to get fine tea at half-a-crown a pound, I suppose, as you did at St. Heliers.”

“We did not know—I don’t exactly see—Nobody told us there would be such a difference.”

“The difference there always is where the king lays on taxes.”

“O, yes: but the taxes are such a mere nothing, we are told! And there is such a difference between half-a-crown and seven shillings! The king can never spend all that difference on all the tea that is sold; especially as they say the Company get as much as they wish, selling it at half-a-crown in Jersey and Guernsey.”

“The Company has not to keep excisemen in the neighbourhood of every tea-shop, to take stock, and weigh the tea, and measure the canisters; and to see that prosecutions are set on foot when the excise laws are broken. All this cannot be done without money; and so the king does not get all the difference we have to pay.”

“So you pay seven shillings a pound for tea?”

“We did; but now we find we must be content with a lower-priced tea. We pay 5s. 6*d.*, and we don’t take it three times a day, or make it so good as we did in Jersey.”

“Ah! but my mother has no idea of any change from what we used to do at home; and my father says we shall be ruined presently, if we go on paying away money as we do now. Till we came here, we had seldom anything to pay for but tea and sugar, and the tax; but now we have to buy almost everything; and we get quite frightened. The tea cannot be done without, on my mother’s account: but I must see whether I cannot manage to make some things at home that we now pay high for.”

“That will hardly help you much; for if you happen to miss the tax on the manufacture, you will have to pay the tax on the materials. In this country, you can scarcely use anything that is not taxed either in the material or in the making; and there is the difference between this place and Jersey. But, to set against this, what you sell is dearer, as well as what you buy.”

“But not in a way that profits us, my father says. If he reckoned only the clay, brought from Devonshire, and the mill, and the wheel and lathe, and the furnaces, and the salt, these would not cost enough to prevent the ware from being very cheap. But the coals pay tax, and the bricks pay tax, as well as the ware itself; and, especially, the men’s wages are high, because all that those wages buy is taxed: and my father has to pay all these taxes, and wait so long before he is paid again, that it requires a great deal of money to carry on his business, just at the time that we have to spend more for our living than we ever did before.”

“Ah! my dear, you have not yet got used to the ways of living in England. You never knew in Jersey, nor we either, what it was to fall short of money, though there was never much more than enough for present small purposes. Here it is the custom to receive larger sums, and to pay away largely also: so that it requires very close calculation to avoid being out of cash sometimes.”

“You find it so!” cried Anna, in a delighted tone. “Now, let me mend that china bowl for you, while you tell me all about it.”

Mary put in her claim to be allowed to help; and while she worked the cement, and Anna nicely joined in bit after bit of the fragments, Mrs. Durell explained that she did not mean to say but that her husband was very properly paid; but that in a country whose custom is to charge the prices of commodities with a variety of taxes, the prices are not only high, but high in different proportions; and the charges get so complicated that people cannot at all tell how their money goes, and can with difficulty frame their calculations of expense when they come from a country where they have been accustomed to pay their contribution direct to the state. The only certainty is, that the articles they most need will bear the heaviest tax charge; because, in its choice of taxable articles, government naturally fixes on those which must be most extensively bought. And, as she shaped her loaf, she told how much bread, yielding duty, had been consumed within those walls since yesterday morning. Her husband had told her of a cruel method of taxation in Holland, in old times, when so much was paid to government for every loaf that passed the mouth of the oven. Disagreeable as this method must be, she doubted whether it could be so costly as the management by which the price of bread was raised in this country.

“Ah! I see you look surprised at the quantity of bread we bake: but my husband likes to be hospitable.”

“Such a man must like it,” replied Anna.

“What kind of man do you mean?” asked the wife, smiling.

“Men that give their best attention to what is of most consequence, instead of least. Mr. Durell looks very grave and attentive when he is talking to Mr. Studley, and counting the pots that come out of the kiln; but his mind is given to very different things from those. If Mr. Durell had but the shoes on his feet in all the world, he would give them to the first lame beggar he met, and go barefoot.”

“He would. You know him,” replied the wife. “He does as he would be done by.”

“He would leave the gleanings of the field, and the missed olives, for the widow, and the fatherless, and the stranger, if he lived in the Scripture land,” continued Anna; “and the reason why is, because he had rather see people happy than grow rich himself.”

“You should hear him when he speaks the piece of poetry that he loves above all others, though he knows a vast deal. It is about mercy that ‘blesses him that gives and him that takes.’ ”

“That is Scripture,” replied Anna, gravely. ‘And how the Lord Jesus said that it is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

“The one comes of the other, no doubt; but it is in poetry that he tells it to me. He has mercy for ever on his tongue. It is a sort of rule of his, in judging of other people. But people are very apt to say that justice and mercy do not agree.”

“How can they think of God, then?” asked Anna. “But if such a man as Mr. Durell is not always as just as he should be, it may be owing to something else than his being merciful.”

“How do you mean ‘not just?’ ” inquired the wife, rather coldly.

“I am sure we have no reason to think him otherwise than just in the business he has to do in the pottery,” replied Anna. “He is very strict and honourable to the king; and when he seems hard on my father, we know it is not his fault. But he speaks a little unfairly of people sometimes—.”

“Only when they do mean things.”

“Well; but still harshly; and if he puts more upon you than is quite your share, and gives away money without always recollecting that he owes it—Nay, now, don’t pretend to think such things right—it may be owing to his having been badly taught, or more sorely tempted than we are, and not to his tender heart.”

“I would not hear so much from another,” said Mrs. Durell; “but you mean no pain to me, nor slight to him, I see. And so I will say that I am so much of your mind, that I do not grudge baking bread even for those that eat it only for the sake of the spirit that is to wash it down; and as to the money we owe, God knows how vexed I am when I cannot pay it without putting my husband in mind of it. There is a poor creature with us now—”

“Here’s papa,” cried Mary.

Durell entered, looking not quite so full of mercy as Anna had sometimes seen him. He asked his wife sternly, why she had allowed a stranger to come and ask as a favour that which she ought to have offered?

“Well, John, I am sorry. I can truly say it. I am sorry I missed knowing this young woman till now.”

Anna interposed with a piece of information that she had lately gained,—that it was dangerous to make new acquaintances in London, without a very precise knowledge who people were; and how should Mrs. Durell know who they were?

“What more has she learned of that since breakfast?” inquired Durell. Anna looked bashful while she acknowledged that Mrs. Durell had yet had no further testimony than her own word for her respectability.

“But she has,” replied Durell. “The impress of truth upon the brow—God’s own seal. She might have trusted me for knowing it at sight.”

“It having never deceived you, John, —do you mean to say? Ah! you are going to protest that you knew all the time when people were cheating you. I ask no more than that you should let me see for myself when there is truth sealed upon the brow. I will not be so long in looking for it, next time.”

“Mr. Durell,” said Anna, “Aaron has been with you this morning; did he—”

“I beg your pardon. Your brother has not been with me this morning.”

“I heard him directed to go, and to give you notice of something. I was going to ask whether he told you that Brennan is to be let off his work, as you wished, for some reason,—I don’t know what. He said something about it to Mr. Studley,—that you were going to get some new clothes for him.”

“Did I promise that? O, I remember. The lad’s a genius, my dear,” (to his wife,) “and we must find up a suit of clothes for him, in some way; and then—”

Mrs. Durell shrugged her shoulders, while Anna explained that after the clothes should come the holiday.

“I thank you much. I thank your father as for a favour done to myself,” replied Durell. “My very best thanks to your father.—Jack, my boy, what’s the matter now?” cried he, snatching up the child, who was whimpering, and only wanted encouragement to burst into a loud cry.

“Stephen won’t let me go with him. Stephen is getting out of the window, and he won’t lift me out that I may lead him.”

True enough; Stephen was found stepping out of the low parlour window into the street.

“Poor fellow! what fancy has taken him now?” said Durell, running into the parlour, followed by every body from the kitchen. “He is a singular character,” he proceeded to explain to Anna. “It has pleased the Almighty to lay a heavy hand upon him, and to permit us to lighten the burden. I always held that this outward darkening of the man was like the shrouding of the firmament in midnight, — making all that moves in it the brighter and clearer; and, since I have known this man, I am sure of it.”

“He is not blind,” said Anna, quietly. “We know him well; we have too good reason to know him. He carried off half our stock of linen.”

“You are mistaken,” averred Durell, with sparkling eyes. “He has been living in our house,—never out of our sight, ever since you came to London.”

Anna explained that she referred to a time before her family left Jersey. Mrs. Durell looked at her husband, as if appealing to him whether Stephen had not proved himself familiar with Jersey.

“Damn your suspicious glances!” cried Durell. “You give glances that you know the poor fellow can’t see, because you are afraid to speak your thought in words that he can hear. Curse your cold-hearted way of giving ear to every slander you hear!”

“Do not say slander,” replied Anna. “I charge Stephen before his face. Let him say how he left our farm. Could a blind man, seen to his rest at night, find his way through the kitchen and out at the door of a strange house, and through the yard, and past the orchard down to the brook, and over the narrow foot-bridge, before he could even get to the winding lane, and then—”

“Stuff! All nothing to do with it!” cried Durell. “It was another man.”

“Even my Jack found out that Stephen could see,” interposed Mrs. Durell.

“Shame on you! Shame to oppress an afflicted man on the word—the fancy of a child that has a fancy for marvels!” cried Durell. “God forgive me for such a scandal happening in my house! As if it was not enough that God’s blessed light is taken away, so that the afflicted cannot know his country by its lying green in the midst of the blue waters,—as if it was not enough that he must return daily thanks for daily bread to strangers that bestow charity, instead of to God that rewards toil,—but he must be insulted before those from whom he has his all! Have done with your sly looks, and your hinting that he is not blind! Bring me a dumb man that shall swear a perjured oath, and a deaf one that shall leer at a foul song, and I will believe that this sightless creature is he that robbed you. Then I will turn him out; but till then I will protect him. Sit down, Stephen.”

“I must go,” said Anna. “I say nothing now, Mr. Durell, about protection being every body’s right; and, as to insult—”

The tears sprang to her eyes, and she found it best to hasten away. She did not think she could stand another fiery glance from Durell, or bear to look again at Stephen, as he stood, the personification of resigned meekness.

“You will come again,” said Mrs. Durell, anxiously, as she followed Anna to the door.

“I don’t know, indeed. Mr. Durell would make one think one’s self wrong, in spite of every thing. He means only to be generous. He almost frightens me, lest I should have made a great mistake. I am sure, in that case, I could not do enough to make up for it. But, if ever I was certain, it is now.”

“There is no mistake, my dear, depend upon it. I have been suspecting, for some time, that Stephen is not so blind as he seems. Do not fret yourself about anything my husband said: but I am very sorry—the first time of your coming—”

“O, don’t be sorry. If it had been you, I should have minded it much more. Do you know, Mrs. Durell, I often wonder what would become of us all, if women quarrelled as men do.—Well; I know it is said that women’s quarrels are very sharp; it may be so, though I have never been in the way of seeing any: but there is something so deep

and awful in men's quarrels, that I can hardly fancy their being heartily made up again."

Mrs. Durell looked as if waiting for a further explanation; but Anna caught another glimpse of Durell, and was gone.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter V.

AN ECONOMICAL PROJECT.

Anna spoke from strong feeling when she reported ill of men's tempers. In her own family the maternal despotism had been very quietly borne; and the paternal rule, however strict, could not materially interfere with the objects and pleasures of the young women in a retired farm-house. But Aaron had never been quiet in the yoke; and Malet sometimes forgot the policy of the lover in resenting the dictation of the father of his beloved. Since the removal of the family to London, there had been frequent contests between Le Brocq and Aaron, each of which was more bitter and more useless than the last. It was as absurd in Le Brocq to treat his son as a child, as it was in Aaron to conclude that every order given him by his father must be more or less wrong. The effect of the mutual folly was to throw Aaron into league with Studley,—a league which began when Studley smiled at Le Brocq's instructions to his son on matters which neither of them understood; and which was strengthened in proportion as Le Brocq became discontented with Studley's assumption of authority in the establishment where he was only foreman, after all. The proprietor was now frequently heard to say that he had no power over his own workmen, and that his foreman and his son carried every thing their own way; while Aaron had so far advanced in his progress to independence as to refuse to answer every question because it was a question, and to consult Studley before he acted on any suggestion whatever. There was, in consequence, so much constraint in every meeting of the household, such grave silence or painful bickerings at every meal, that it began to be a doubt in the mind of each member of the family, whether it would not be better for the father and son to separate at once than to go on in the high-road to an irreconcilable quarrel.

On returning home, Anna walked straight through the yard into the manufactory, hoping that the emergency of the occasion would be a sufficient excuse with her father for the intrusion. She gave unintentional notice of her approach by jingling a pile of ware as she passed.

"Here they come," said one and another within hearing, as she advanced to the kiln where some knocking was going on, and three or four persons seemed to be busy. A man, who was holding a candle stuck in a lump of clay, observed hoarsely, "Here they come." "Here they come," repeated the treble voice of the boy who was receiving the blocks of baked clay which had filled up the arch. "Are they coming?" asked the mounted man who was removing the blocks, and letting out the hot air of the kiln. "Let them come, if they can't let us alone for once," growled Le Brocq, who was satisfying his sight with the piles of spirit casks ranged one above another in the kiln, with each its four rims of brown ochre, while jars and bottles were nicely packed in the spaces between, no one touching another, but with scarcely room for a hand to pass.

“Back! back! Go in!” exclaimed Le Brocq, when he saw Anna’s timid face, instead of meeting the bright brown eye of Durell. “This is no place for you. You know I desired—”

“But, father, I have something very particular to say. I have seen Stephen.—No, I have not got back our linen. I am afraid we shall never get it back. Perhaps if you spoke to Mr. Durell —”

“I will—I will: when he comes this afternoon. Go in, child. Go!”

“But I rather think Mr. Durell is not coming this afternoon. He says he has not seen Aaron, nor heard from him.”

“Not seen Aaron! Not had the notice! Bless my soul! what are we ever to do at this rate? No more of him!” suspecting that Anna was going to say something for her absent brother. “He shall know my mind when I see him. Booth, do you think we may go on?”

Booth considered that it would be a vexatious thing to be informed against for such a trifle. It was an ugly thing, too, to run the risk of the penalty. He stood with the bar in his hand, ringing it against the bricks.

“You can bear witness that I did all I could, by sending my son with a notice,” observed Le Brocq. “I dare say we shall find it is some mistake of Anna’s. It is too late now to defer the drawing.”

“As you please, sir: not that I can exactly say I witnessed Mr. Aaron’s being sent with the notice; but I dare say it will be all safe enough, sir. Shall I go on?”

“You could not draw all the large, and leave the duty-paid, could you? No, no; I see that would not do. You may go on.”

Studley came up while the hot ware was being quickly handed from man to boy, and from boy to the ground where it must stand to cool.

“So! No spies to-day! We are in luck. I thought Durell would oblige me so far as to consider you, as I made a point of requesting that he would. I congratulate you on having your premises to yourself, sir, for once. I shall take care and thank Durell.”

“Speak for yourself, if you please, sir, but not for me. I am quite capable of thanking any person that I feel obliged to.”

Studley made a ceremonious bow; and immediately asked Booth whether, in his old master’s time, it had ever been allowed to place the ware for cooling in such a manner as he now beheld.

“Why, no,” replied Booth; “but such are my orders.”

“Do you mean to talk to my men about their old master before my face?” asked Le Brocq.

“A rather superfluous question, sir, if you heard what I said.”

“O, father!” interposed Anna, breathlessly. “How I wish you would take us back to Jersey, and let Malet and Louise come here. My mother is always talking about the cows, and—”

“And you want to be milking them again, child? Go away. Go to your mother. Nobody can leave me to my own business, I think.”

“If you think so, sir,” said Studley, “perhaps we had better part.”

“With all my heart, Mr. Studley. I should not have made the proposal first, as you are an old servant of my uncle’s; but since you offer it, I am quite willing; and the sooner the better, if I may declare my opinion.”

The work-people within hearing had all suspended their business to listen to this amiable dialogue; and the having an audience determined Studley to finish with dignity. He thought it a pity that Mr. Le Brocq had not been more explicit. He would have conferred an obligation by being so; for an office of high honour and profit had been within reach of his humble servant for some little time past, which he should certainly have accepted but for the promise he had given his old master not to refuse his best services to the new proprietor,—with a sort of understanding, moreover, that some acknowledgment in the form of some kind of partnership would follow.

Out of the question entirely, Le Brocq declared. While he had a son and a son-in-law—

Beside the question entirely, Studley averred. The son-in-law being in charge of the Jersey farm (unlike all other farms, if the family report were true), and the son being in course of establishing himself in a distinct line of business, there could be no competitor;—not that he now desired a partnership. He would not accept the largest share that the nature of his services could be supposed to authorise; the office he spoke of being, to a man of ambition like himself, so far preferable. He would take leave to commence his canvas immediately; explaining to all his friends (meaning no offence) the reasons of his appearing so tardily in the field.

A pang shot through the heart of Le Brocq at the intimation that his son was about to leave him. He made no inquiry, and had the resolution to avoid showing that the intelligence was new to him. While he commanded every man to resume his employment, Studley stalked out of the manufactory by one door, while Anna stole back by the way she had come.

In the yard she met Aaron. Her immediate object was to prevent his meeting his father at present. She wanted to know whether he had delivered the notice a sufficient number of hours before. No: he had had something else to do first. He meant to go presently. When told that it was too late, he supposed that it would not signify, but did

not see why there should have been such a prodigious hurry about drawing the kiln. He was sure Studley could not have authorised it.

Anna had so much to ask and to tell that she wished Aaron would now go with her, as he had promised, on an expedition which must not be much longer delayed. It was time to be thinking about a washing of clothes; there having been none since the unfortunate one which Stephen had turned into an occasion of disaster. Anna and her mother knew nothing yet of English society which could lead them to suppose that there was anything peculiar in their methods touching the purification of their apparel; but as their stock had been somewhat circumscribed since the trespass of the thief, Anna began to think of arranging the circumstances of time and place; and in a few minutes, when she had accounted to her mother for her proceedings, her brother and she were on their way in search of a clear stream where the operation might be conducted after the only method she had yet heard or conceived of.

It seemed a pity to wander so far from home, when a prodigious river was running near the back door: but Anna had watched the Thames, through all its moods, for a fortnight, and had never found it sufficiently pure for her purpose. Besides, there were so many people always about that she should not have courage to sing at the pitch which was necessary to insure good washing. Her having seen no washing in the river since she came was a strong presumption that the Thames did not afford the proper bath. It must be some pure brook between two green hills, with alder bushes on which to hang the linen to dry, and some quiet nook where it might be deposited for a night or two in safety. Such a brook were the brother and sister now in search of, on a hot day in June, when alders and green banks would be peculiarly refreshing. They were prepared for having some way to go, which was very well. They were in no hurry, and promised each other not to return till they had accomplished their object. They little knew what they promised; for, though they were cured of the fancy of myrtles before the house and an orchard behind, they had no doubt whatever that "country" meant hill and dale, wood and stream. When they arrived at Kennington Common, they stood and laughed at the entire absence of trees, quite as much as from the pleasure of seeing an expanse of green once more. While panting with heat, they wondered that the Kennington people did not prefer high banks with overhanging hedges to white palings which fatigued the eye under a summer sun. The stream which flanks the Brixton road was the first thing they saw which could at all answer their purpose; and this was decided to be too public. On they wandered, tempted by the sight of rising ground, to some lanes near Herne Hill and Dulwich; and in these lanes, and the fields which bordered them, Anna found something at last which nearly satisfied her heart. There was a carpet of daisies under foot; and wild roses, some blushing and unfolding, others flaring and bleached in the sun, bloomed in the hedges. There were no sleek Jersey cows, with their delicate taper horns and countenances more refined than ever cows had before; and Anna was disappointed as often as she unconsciously looked for the blue sea through a gap in the hedge: but the smell of hay came from some place near, and a thorn which stood in a damp nook had still blossom enough to remind her of an apple tree. This thorn suggested a happy thought; and Anna was glad to perceive, on looking round her, that thorns were abundant in the neighbouring field. She had heard something of thorn leaves being dried to mix with tea. The most terrifying of the many fearful household expenses of the Le Brocqs was tea; and it

would be a great relief to lessen it one-half by mixing a large proportion of English tea with the foreign.

“And there is the kiln to dry it in,” suggested Aaron. “The frying-pan full can be dried in no time; and I will look to the shaking the pan, if my father does not like that you should have anything to do with the kiln.”

“And if we find it really good tea, I may perhaps mix some for sale, and get enough profit to find us in tea. I am sure that would please my father; and my mother might drink as much as she likes.”

Anna lost no time in spreading her shawl on the ground, and plucking leaves from the lower boughs, while her brother climbed somewhat higher, and chose the most juicy sprouts from the youngest shoots. They agreed that some good might arise out of the extravagantly high prices which prevailed in England. In Jersey, where they paid for tea only one-third what was charged in London, they should never have thought of making use of the leaves of the thorn; and they supposed that, as they had been made inventive in this one particular, the people of England might be generally ingenious in a similar manner.

Several persons passed through the field before the green heap on the shawl had grown very large. A woman with a basket on her arm and a little boy at her heels looked back again and again, all the way to the stile, and then had to return to fetch away her child, who stood staring, as if longing to help.

“You have a basket, I see,” said Anna, smiling. “If you like to carry away any leaves, pray help yourself.”

“What may they be for?”

“To mix with tea. Tea is so very dear now! I suppose you drink tea?”

“O, yes, ma’am, we take tea,” said the woman: but, instead of filling her basket, she shook a handful of leaves from her child’s grasp, and, disregarding his roaring, took him up on one arm, and her basket on the other, and carried him till he was fairly past the stile.

Presently came two men, bustling along, as if it had been the coldest day in January. They halted, however, near the bush.

“I say,” cried one of them, after a whisper from his companion; “what are ye arter there?”

From out of the bush, Aaron made the same answer that his sister had before given.

“Smash me! if that baint a good ’un!” cried he, looking at his companion; and all the way as they proceeded, they were evidently talking of what they had seen.

Next approached a stooping old labourer, in a smock-frock, and with a scythe over his shoulder. He walked painfully, and stopped near the thorn to wipe his brows.

He kindly warned the young people to take care what they were about. He considered them very bold to do what they were doing by broad daylight, in a field which was a thoroughfare.

“We have just done,” replied Anna, colouring. “We are going away directly.” And she drew close to Aaron, to call him away, and tell him her fears that the owner of the thornbush would not like their gathering the leaves, if he knew of it. They had better go somewhere else for as many more as they wanted. As they tied up the shawl by the corners, and sauntered away, the old labourer shook his head at them several times; but was silent as an unquestioned oracle. There was no disturbance of the kind when they had transferred their exertions to a more private inclosure; and they obtained as large a supply as the shawl could possibly hold before they stopped to rest.

“Now, let us sit down, and I will tell you something,” said Anna.—Aaron stretched himself out at length on the grass, using his bundle for a pillow.

“You must not go to sleep,” continued Anna. “I have been to Mrs. Durell this morning,—(what an odd thing that she did not put me in mind of this way of getting tea, when I was complaining of the price!)—and there I saw somebody else, besides Mrs. Durell and her husband. I saw Stephen.”

“Stephen!” cried Aaron, starting up, now in no danger of going to sleep. “You silly girl, why did not you tell me that before?”

“Because I was afraid you would go and be in a passion with Mr. Durell,—as I am afraid you will be when I have told you all he said,—though, I’m sure, I am very willing to excuse him. But, Aaron,—do sit down, Aaron. It will do just as well when we get home again.”

As if a man who had escaped once could not escape again! Aaron said. If Stephen was above ground, he would get hold of him,—not only because he had betrayed hospitality, and stolen the linen, but because he had told lies about the ways of going on in England,—with all his talk of nobody paying taxes in England, or merely such a trifle that they never found it out.

“But indeed he will not get away,” declared Anna. “Mr. Durell said he should keep him, and was so angry with me for being sure that it was our Stephen, that I quite expect Stephen will stay and brave it out. We will go together, and try what we can do to get back the linen, if—O, Aaron! if you will but try to keep your temper. But, indeed, Aaron, I had rather lose all the clothes I have left,—everything I have in the world,—than see you lose your temper as you do sometimes.”

“What is it to you?” asked Aaron.

“You have asked me that very often before, and I have always told you—”

“Yes; I know—I know. But I am not half so likely to be surly even to Stephen as to—I tell you, Anna, you have no idea what it is to be under my father, every hour of the day.”

“Have not I? I think I have; for, though I do not want more freedom myself, I know what it must be to you to want it. It makes me turn sometimes hot and sometimes cold when I hear him answer for you to strangers, as if you were a child, or settling all your little matters at home, without so much as ever looking in your face to see how you like what he is doing.”

“Really! Do you always see that? If I had known that—”

“You might have known it. You did know it; for I have told you so a hundred times.”

“But one can never be sure of it at the moment; and you always keep your head down so, when my father and I have any words.”

“Because I am always thinking what a pity it is that neither of you is ready with a soft answer; and I must say, you ought to be the readiest, from your being the son. But is it really true that you are going to leave my father?”

“Who said such a thing?”

“Mr. Studley told my father so, before several of the men, and they must have seen that he did not know it before.”

“My father must have put him into a passion, or he would not have let it out till next week. How much more did he tell you?”

“Nothing; but you must let me know all now; and my father as soon as we go home.”

“There is no reason for its being a secret, further than that the plans are not all settled yet. Studley happened to know of a glass-bottle work, where they will be glad to take in an active young partner, with the prospect of his joining the stone-bottle making with it, by and bye. Now, you need not look so shocked, as if anybody was thinking of making away with my father. The thing is this;—that Studley is sure my father will soon be tired of carrying on his pottery business by himself, and will be off for Jersey again; and then the business will come to me: and no two businesses can be more fit to go on together than the black-glass and the stone-ware. Studley says I shall be one of the first men in London, some day.”

“But where is it? Who taught you to make glass? What can you know about it?” asked the alarmed sister.

“If I told you I was going to break stones for the roads, I believe you would ask who had taught me. Why, it is not so difficult to make bottle-glass as our fish-soup. Put river sand and soapers’ waste into the furnace, and there you have it;—or, if you like it better, common sand and lime, with a little clay or sea salt. What can be easier than

that? And where is the risk, with materials that you may pick up from under your feet almost wherever you go?”

“If that were all;—but there are so many things besides the making and selling that have to be attended to in this country!”

“Why, that is true; or I fancy we should see twice as much glass in people’s houses as we do. Everybody thinks glass beautiful, and everybody who has tried it finds it convenient; and yet, I hear, though there are nearly twice as many people to use it, and twice as much money to buy it with, there is less glass used in this country than there was fifty years ago.”

“Then I am sure I would have nothing to do with it.”

“I would not, unless I saw the reason, and was pretty sure that the state of things would change. ’Tis this meddling of the excise that plagues the glass-makers, and makes them charge the article high,—far higher in proportion than we have to charge our stone bottles.”

“That is what I meant when you laughed at me for being afraid. I did not doubt that you might melt sand and the other stuff properly; but I thought you might not understand all about the taxes.”

“Why not as well as another man? to say nothing of a particular good reason I shall have for knowing. O, I shall only have to give notice of drawing out bottles; taking care that the notice is given between six in the morning and eight in the evening; and that the pots are charged with fresh materials while the officers are by; and that the material is worked within sixteen hours after the time mentioned; and that I put down the right number of bottles when I write the declaration, for fear of being taken in for a fine of 100*l.*; and—”

“Why, this is worse than what my father has to attend to!”

“But not so bad as if I were going to make other kinds of glass besides the common black article. There are thirty-two clauses in the Act that the glass-makers have to work by; and several of them will not concern me.”

“I should think that is very lucky; for, you see, you don’t always remember to give notice, when you are sent on purpose.”

“I declare I did not forget it. I had something else to do first, that was all; and my father was in one of his hurries. However, if any mischief comes of it, I will bear the blame and the cost; and no man can do more.”

“I doubt that: I mean that you might be careful not to ruffle another mind as well as your own. I am sure, Aaron, if you were standing on our poquelaye, as you used to do, and could with a breath bring up or blow away thunder-clouds that were ready to blacken the old castle, and set the seafowl screaming, and throw a gloom over the wide sea and the green land, it would be your pleasure to keep all bright, and send the

ugly shade down the sky; and yet, if my father and you find each other ever so calm—”

“What does it signify? The blackest clouds are soon gone, one way or another.”

“But it is not with our minds and our passions as it is with the sky and the sea. It is God’s pleasure that when the sky is cleared, the face of the earth should be brighter than ever: but when a quarrel has overshadowed kindness, the brightest of the sunshine is gone for ever.”

Aaron found it convenient to look up into the actual sky for something to say; and he declared that it was well he did, for some such clouds as his sister had described were making their appearance above the tree-tops which were beginning to rustle in the rising wind. They lost no time in returning, resolving neither to look for more streams, nor to turn aside to call at the Durells’.—Before they reached home, the streets were as plashy as any lane in Jersey, (which is saying a great deal,) and the wind roared among the houses like the fiercest furnace which was to be under Aaron’s charge. The wet was dripping from all the corners of the bundle they carried; and Aaron undertook to spread out its contents in the manufactory to dry, while his sister hastened into the house.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VI.

LESSONS IN LOYALTY.

In the house sat a merry party;—a really mirthful set of countenances surrounded the table. Anna wondered for a moment what could have called up a hearty laugh from her father, this day; but when she saw that Durell was present, there was no longer any mystery. He and a companion seemed in a fair way to demolish a pie which Anna knew her mother made a great point of for to-morrow's dinner; and (of all odd companions) he had seated beside him Brennan, the poor boy who wrought at the wheel. Brennan sometimes made a little progress in diminishing the savoury food which his patron was heaping on his plate; and then drew back behind Durell's broad shoulders, to hide the laughter which he could not restrain when jokes went round. Master Jack was upon the table, on hands and knees, looking into the pie and the ale pitcher by turns. Mrs. Le Brocq was plying her needle with all imaginable diligence, only stopping when an agony of mirth shook her ponderous form. Le Brocq himself had a glass of ale in his hand, and a twinkle of good humour in his eye. What could all this be about? Durell had been applying some of his natural magic to kindle hearts and melt resolves. He had so vehemently thanked Le Brocq for consenting to spare Brennan for a few hours, that he had obtained possession of the boy for this evening as well as to-morrow; had set Mrs. Le Brocq to work to diminish some hoarded clothes which Aaron had outgrown before they were worn out, and which would now be a treasure to Brennan; and had caused dull care to vanish before the spirit of genial hospitality in Le Brocq's own heart.

“Hey, Anna!” cried he. “Look at her, dripping like a fish! Get yourself dry and warm, my dear, before you sit down. We wondered what had become of you. I fancied you were up in the clouds somewhere; and, I suppose, by your look, I was right.”

“Have you been up in the clouds?” demanded Jack, opening his eyes wide upon her.

“Not to-day, dear: but I was once in the middle of a cloud, Jack.”

“Were you? How? Where? Had you a ladder? Did you climb? Did you fly?”

A burst of laughter followed, which amazed poor Jack. His father stroked his head, and bade him not be ashamed. The last was a good guess, whatever might be thought about the ladder.

“I was on a high hill,” said Anna, as soon as she could be heard; “and the cloud came sailing—”

“Was it all golden and bright? Did it make you shut your eyes?”

Before Anna could answer, her mother sent her to change her clothes and bring her work-bag, undertaking to satisfy the child about the cloud. This she attempted in the

antique method,—that is, by saying some brilliant things that were not true. She appended an account of such a thunder-storm as had just happened;—how two angry clouds ride up against each other, and when their edges touch, they strike fire, which is the lightning; and then one rolls over the other, and makes a great rumbling, which is the thunder. The frowning child, with his mouth open, took it all in, and might have got a desperately wrong notion of a thunder-storm for life, if his father had not interfered.

“Bless my soul, madam, what do you mean to tell the child next? That the clouds open and let down dogs and cats to worry naughty boys, I suppose? I will not have my boy made sport of, I can tell you.”

“Sport!” exclaimed the perplexed old lady, “I am sure I only meant to tell him what my mother told me.”

“Tell him nothing of the kind, if you please. Fairy tales, if you like,—as many as you like,—pretty allegories of God’s doings, which will speak one kind of truth to him in proportion as he finds they have not the kind of truth that he thought. But no lies, madam;—especially, no lies about God’s glorious works. Jack, you are not to believe a word the lady has told you. She was only joking with you, boy. When you have forgotten what she said, I will tell you a true story about a cloud.”

Jack looked offended at being thus at the mercy of two people who contradicted each other. Mrs. Le Brocq, who did not clearly understand what was the matter, not knowing any more about an allegory than about an alligator, and seeing no great difference between a fairy tale and an embellished fib, hung her head abashed over her work. This showed Jack which way his vengeance should be directed. He gave a sort of kangaroo leap, which brought him in front of Mrs. Le Brocq on the table, seized the top of her cap (the high Norman peasant cap), and pulled at it with all his might; albeit he held a handful of hair with it. Brennan was the quickest in rescuing the complaining lady. Durell caught up Jack, crying—

“Bravo, boy; thou’rt as like thy father! Never take a lie quietly, boy. But, Jack, you have hurt the lady; ask pardon for hurting her, Jack.”

Jack asked pardon; but he would not kiss Mrs. Le Brocq. Instead of urging the point against the child’s evident dislike, Durell made the propitiation himself. He respectfully replaced the cap, delicately stroked the hair on the forehead, and kissed the cheek;—precisely at which moment Studley entered the room.

He professed that he was extremely sorry to disturb the party, whom he perceived to be very agreeably engaged; and particularly as it happened to be a little affair of his own which brought him into their presence. The fact was, he had been a long round in search of Mr. Durell, who would be found, Mrs. Durell had told him, in the prosecution of his duty, as usual.

The office which Studley had referred to in the morning as being his object of desire in preference to remaining with Le Brocq, was that of Messenger of the Excise Court,

with a salary of 78*l.*, to which he added, in his own imagination, certain ‘advantages.’ He knew that the Court prefers candidates who are experienced in the manufacture of exciseable commodities; and he flattered himself that, in conjunction with other circumstances, his having been concerned in the glass and stone bottle manufactures, and having mastered the secrets of soap-making, might be powerful recommendations. In the excise, as in all spy systems, the rule of action is, ‘set a thief to catch a thief.’ None are found so apt at detecting revenue frauds, and so eager in informing against and punishing them, as those who, in their day, have defrauded the revenue. Studley’s pretensions were excellent, in this point of view; and he believed that if he could make sure of the interest of two more high personages, besides those whose good word he had already solicited, he should be pretty secure of the appointment.

“I have merely to ask one little exertion from you, Sir,” said he to Durell. “Everybody knows what interest you have with the gentleman who befriended you,—who procured you your appointment.”

“Everybody but myself and he, I suppose. Well, Sir.”

“Your influence is undeniable, I am well assured. I believe I am tolerably certain of being made messenger in the place of poor Haggart; but it would set my mind entirely at ease if you would speak in my favour to the gentleman in question.”

“Nobody can be more ready than I am, Sir, to set people’s minds at ease, when I can; but let me tell you, from the day you get this office, you will never have a mind at ease.”

“Ha! ha! very good! That is my own concern, entirely, you perceive. As I was going to say, you can speak to my fitness for the office, I am sure. As to politics, for instance, though I should never think of meddling, you are aware, (which a servant of the government is understood never to do,) yet I am decidedly a government man. Decidedly so. You remember the part I took in Gardiner’s election?”

“Perfectly well; from the pains I took on the other side to counteract you.”

“Well, well; that is past and gone. You will not object to a government servant being of government politics, or to bearing testimony that he is so. Your known liberality—Your humble servant, Miss Le Brocq,” setting a chair for Anna, as she appeared with her work-bag. “Let none depreciate the air of Lambeth who looks upon you, Ma’am.”

“I won’t detain you, Mr. Studley, to discuss my liberality or any thing else, now your time is so precious. I have no doubt, Sir, of your qualifications, from the little I have seen of you; and it gives me pleasure to serve my neighbours; but it is against my principles that one officer in an establishment like the Excise should stir to procure the appointment of another. A man should enter his office unfettered by obligation to any of the parties with whom he will have to do. This has been my reason before for

declining to interfere in similar cases; and it is my reason now.—And now, Miss Anna, I have humbly to ask your pardon—”

“Excuse my interrupting you,” said Studley; “but I trust, Sir, you will let the matter remain in your mind, and think better of it.”

“My decision is final, Mr. Studley. God knows there is so little opportunity of acting freely on one’s principles in such an office as mine, that I am little likely to give up my liberty of conscience when by chance I can use it.”

And he turned to Anna, to seek forgiveness for his vehemence of the morning. His soul was so sick with the sight of oppression, that he lost his self-command (if ever he had any) at the remotest appearance of bearing hard on the unfortunate. He really had great confidence in Stephen. He would lay his life that Stephen was an honest fellow; but he admitted this to be no reason why he should have behaved like a brute to a lady, who had spoken under a mistake. Studley meanwhile had turned smilingly to Le Brocq.

“I shall have better success with you, I fancy, Sir. There is one little requisite, perhaps you are aware, which I believe I must be indebted to you for. This office of messenger is an office of trust. Infinite quantities of money pass through the hands of the messengers of the Court—”

“Though taxation is a mere trifle in England.”

“When I speak of infinite quantities of money, I do not, of course, intend to be taken literally; but the recovery of common charges, as well as of fines and penalties, is committed to the messengers; and theirs is a situation of infinite trust,—requiring security, of course;—small security;—not above 500*l.* Now, where should I look for this security but to the respectable house which I have served,—I will say, faithfully served, for so many years?”

“To any place rather, I should think. To say nothing, on my own account, of the doubt whether the extravagance of living in England will leave 500*l.* at my own disposal, it is a clear point that an officer who has to levy charges should not be under obligations to a man who is subject to such charges. You must know, Studley, that on the first disagreement, you must betray your duty to government, or do an ungracious thing by me; and if—”

“O, we shall have no disagreements.”

“I was going to say that if we have no disagreements, we lay ourselves open to the suspicion of collusion. If Mr. Durell is clear on his point, I am doubly so on mine. I cannot be your security, Sir; which I am sorry for, as I should be happy to show that I bear no malice on account of what passed this morning.”

“Bear no malice! you do,” exclaimed Studley, unable any longer to keep his temper. “Collusion, indeed! You talk of suspicion of collusion, when here I find you heaping

favours upon favours on the surveyor,—a man you never heard of till you were in his power! Suspicion won't be the word long.”

“What does the fellow mean?” asked Durell, his eyes lighting up.

“I mean, Sir, that here is an empty pie-dish, and an empty ale-jug; and that this is not the first time I have seen you feasting in this house; and that the very working boys are taken from the wheel, and dressed and feasted too at your request; and much besides, Sir. Little things, Sir, which you may call trifles, Sir, are indications,—are symptoms of great things, Sir—”

“Nothing truer,” said Durell, contemptuously. “Paltry things like you, Studley, are indications how despicable must be the little-great system to which you will presently belong. A writhing maggot is a symptom that the carcass is stinking.”

“O, Mr. Durell! Don't provoke him,” cried Anna. “Do think of the consequences!”

“'Tis such angel-tempers as yours, my dear, forgiving rough men's brutality, as you forgave me this morning, that encourage us to be brutal again. Don't let me off so easily next time, if you wish me well.”

And he turned to Studley, as if about to apologize for the offensiveness of his language, when Studley observed, trying to conceal his passion.

“It is very kind of you, Madam, to bid him think of the consequences. He will not have long to wait for the consequences, if he blazes abroad his disaffection in this manner.—Disaffection! yes.—Do you suppose, Sir, that your exertions in favour of a certain anti-ministerial candidate at a late election passed unnoticed? We don't want to be told that you could not vote; but there is little use in denying that you declared your opinion,—daily, hourly, wherever you went,—your opinion as to which principles ought to be supported. Join this with your avowed contempt of the establishment in which you serve, and what is the inference,—the clear inference? It is in vain, Sir, to deny the part you took in the election I refer to.”

“Deny it! I glory in it!” thundered Durell, who had started up in the midst of this attack upon him.

“Indeed!” muttered Studley, quite perplexed.

“Indeed! yes, indeed! What should a man glory in but in the use of that which God gave, and which men dare to meddle with only because they know too little of its force to dread it. When men once talked of shutting up the four winds in a cave, it was not from dread of their force, but because it was mortifying not to know, when those winds were abroad, whence they came and whither they went; and so when our masters would put a padlock upon our opinions, it is not because they guess the danger of shutting in what is for ever expanding, but because they covet the power of letting them fly this way and that, to suit their own little purposes, and puff away their own petty enemies. But this flying in the face of God Almighty is such child's play, as

well as something worse, that perhaps He may forgive in the infant what He would sorely visit upon the answerable man.”

“What is all this?” asked Le Brocq, while the countenances of those present corroborated the question.

“Why, just this,” replied Durell, putting a restraint upon himself, and stopping his rapid walk through the apartment. “The object of taxation is to support government. The object of government is to afford liberty and security to every man that lives under it. Yet those by whom the taxation of the people is managed are to be abridged of their liberty, if they mean to keep their security. In the most important point of all others,—in the choice of those who are to govern, they are to have no liberty of action, and their very thoughts and speech are to be prescribed. We excisemen are to do nothing towards providing that the oppressed shall be set free, and the industrious rewarded, and the ignorant enlightened, and an empire blessed:—we are to do nothing in the only way in which we could do much. Not only must we surrender our political rights while receiving our bread; but we must not stimulate others to do what we must leave undone. Even this is not enough: we must hush to sleep the will that has been wakened within us, and seem to believe that which we hate as falsehood, or hang on the foul breath of a spy, like that fellow, for our bread and our good name.—But, so be it! We are spies; and it is fitting that we should be at the mercy of a spy.”

“But why?” interposed Anna. And Jack seconded the question with, “Why are you a spy, I wonder?”

“You may well ask, boy. However, they shall never bind my thoughts, and chain my tongue,—come of it what may. They heard no complaint from me, from first to last, about the surrender of my right to vote; but if they think to prevent me from avowing who is the people’s friend and who the people’s enemy,—if they suppose I will submit to have it thought that I am with them when my heart is against them, I will fling back in their faces the mask they would put upon mine; and go with an unveiled front where God’s works are for ever drawing out their long tale of truth to shame man’s falsehoods.”

“Take me with you then, papa. Do take me with you,” cried Jack.

“The little master had better make sure of what sort of place he would have to go to,” observed Studley. “He might not altogether like a jail.”

“A jail!” cried every body.

“I mean no more than this,—that the penalty for certain excise offences is 500*l.*; and all people are not always ready to pay 500*l.*”

And Studley went out, now the confirmed enemy of the whole party he left behind.

“I am not going to justify that man’s spying and threats,” observed Le Brocq: “but I really do not see why the government should not make a point of its own servants being of its own political opinions; and, as for their not voting at elections, it is a

favour done to the people, I conclude, from the consideration that so large a body of persons, supposed to be biassed by their dependence on the government, would often turn the scale in a close contest.”

“And where can there be a stronger proof of the badness of the system? Is there no better way of the people paying for government than by their supporting a host of tax-gatherers, who are first compelled to harass their supporters by daily ill offices, and then become the slaves of rulers in proportion as they become hated by the ruled? Let the people of England come forward like men and Christians, asking to have their state-subscription levied in the form of a periodical contribution, rather than wrenched and filched from them after the manner of a theft,—so that the gang of wrenchers and filchers, of whom I am one, may support themselves by a more honest labour, and once more become men in their social rights and their liberty of speech.”

“Do you mean to remain in your office till that day?”

“If they will let me exercise ordinary freedom of opinion. Yes: while the system exists, it is the duty of those who feel its evils to soften their operation as much as possible. If I resigned to-night, the next best-drilled spy would take my place, and in some lower rank there would be room made for some mischief-loving, shabby-souled tyrant;—for who but such would accept the most hateful of offices with the meanest of salaries? Frightful as is the sum which Englishmen pay for their standing spy-army, the forces are so numerous that the pay of each (considered in connexion with the odium of the office) is not enough to command the services of honest men. But if you had seen the half of what has come before my eyes, you would value the blessing of a tender heart, here and there, among such a tribe as hold the tyranny of the excise in their power; and you would entreat such an one to keep in his place for love of the widow and the fatherless, and the poor, and such as have none to help them.”

When Durell was persuaded to sit down again, and fill his glass, and Aaron had been summoned by his sister to come and listen, there were no bounds to the interest with which the surveyor’s tales of sorrow and crime were listened to. He set out with declaring that there was scarcely a possibility of a trader’s escaping persecution, loss, or even ruin, if the excise officer who was over him happened to be his enemy. He unfolded such scenes of strife, fraud, hardship, and bitter woe, as terrified the tender-spirited women, and made even Aaron look grave at the thought of committing himself to be acted upon by such a system. He trembled at tales of masters being betrayed by faithless servants; of false oaths taken by men who appeared weekly at church in a frame of decent piety; of fathers selling their children’s beds from under them to pay arbitrary penalties innocently incurred; of a widowed mother following her only son to prison, eagerly explaining to all who behold his shame, that it was not for any “real fault,” but for a factitious offence, —a boast alas! never repeated; for it is they who are imprisoned for factitious crimes who come out broken-hearted and reckless, apt to become, first smugglers, and then felons, like the youth whose tale Durell was telling. The more he told, the more he had to tell,—the more impassioned became his speech, and the more eager his recourse to his glass. Brennan had not yet moved from his attitude of fixed attention, and even Jack was still frowning and gazing in his father’s face, when Le Brocq perceived that his guest was no longer in a

state to be listened to as one who knew what he was about. Perhaps he was overcome as much by intense feeling as by what he had taken; but he slid from his tone of solemn and reasonable denunciation to senseless invective, to ridicule, to mirth, to nonsense, till his friends could bear the humbling scene no longer. Anna hastened, in an agony of fear and shame, to tell Mrs. Durell that Aaron and his father were bringing her husband home. It was the only thing that could be done with him; for he had taken some imaginary offence, and would not remain in their house for a moment longer, and was too riotous to be kept on any other part of the premises.

“I know what you are come for,” said Mrs. Durell mournfully to Anna. “It is not the first time by many, since he was made an officer. If he should be cut off in his drink, I shall always say his office was answerable for it.”

Anna could not leave the unhappy wife when Durell was lying in the next room, breathing hard, and angrily muttering in his drunken sleep.

“You must not be too hard upon him to-morrow,” said she, thinking that she saw signs of wrath in the burning tears which could not be repressed. “You have reason to know the tenderness of his heart; and it is my belief that it is that tenderness that betrays him.”

“To be sure it is. Every day of his life he crosses somebody that he wishes well to, and feels that he can do nothing for others that he sees oppressed, and that as often as he shows mercy, he is betraying his trust. Hard upon him! When he begins to make light of God’s providence, and to slight the sorrows that he sees, I will be hard upon my husband.”

“You deserve to be the wife and the comforter of such a man.”

“Thank you for saying so while he is lying there!” exclaimed the wife, looking up through her tears. “You and I know that he is more fit to hold some friendly rule over the people than to dog them as an enemy. Some would laugh at such a thought, and say he cannot rule himself. But, depend upon it, if it were not for the misrule that is every day before his eyes, he would govern himself like the most moderate of them all; and then he would never be so wretched in his shame as he will be to-morrow.”

“Do you think Mr. Durell will be better to-morrow, so as to take me where he promised?” asked Brennan, who had silently followed into the room, and was now watching the rain-drops chasing one another down the window-panes.

Mrs. Durell shook her head, and the boy’s heart sank at the sight. He was told that he might sleep here to-night, to take the chance. It was not very likely that Stephen would come back to-night, having been abroad since he slipped out by himself in the morning. Anna did not now ask any question about Stephen, fearing that it might seem like reminding Mrs. Durell of her husband’s roughness on that subject when she was last within his doors.

“Will you please to come here, ma’am?” said Brennan, beckoning her to the window.

She saw Studley standing under a gateway, as if for shelter, but laughing, and pointing very significantly at Durell's house. Brennan whispered that Studley had met master and Mr. Aaron when they were trying to make Mr. Durell walk straight; and that he had followed them all the rest of the way, talking about fair traders' luck in choosing their time for making surveyors drunk.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VII.

HARDER LESSONS IN LOYALTY.

While Durell, as much ashamed of himself the next morning, as his wife had foretold, made an exertion to perform his promise to Brennan, notwithstanding a desperate head-ache, Anna was making experiments with the new tea her brother had helped her to manufacture. It was so good as to make her wonder why all but the wealthier classes in England did not mix a larger or smaller proportion of those leaves with the genuine tea. She resolved to try a variety of herbs for the same purpose; and hoped that when she had satisfied herself that she had obtained the best article in her power, she might make a profitable little business of her manufacture. Perhaps the reason why she did not hear of others doing so was that few had the advantage of a kiln in which to dry the material quickly, equally, and in large quantities. Meantime, there seemed to be customers ready before she asked for them. A woman, whom somebody pronounced to be Mrs. Studley, came to inquire, and carried away a pound, which she insisted upon paying for before she tasted it. The example once set, several of the people on the premises, or their wives, made similar purchases in the course of the next few days.

Aaron meanwhile recovered from the temporary alarm about his new business connection into which Durell's disclosures had thrown him. He trusted that the perils of glass-makers had been exaggerated in the heated fancy of the surveyor; and would not believe Anna when she averred that Durell was perfectly sober when he told of the extent to which glass-masters are dependent on their servants. He had made a clear distinction between the present and the former times of the manufacture; showing how the present are an improvement upon the former, though restrictions and hardships enough remain to account for the manufacture being stationary while all circumstances but the interference of the excise are favourable to its unlimited extension. Durell had told a story of a respectable glass-manufacturer who had suffered cruelly, some years ago, from having accidentally affronted one of his men. The man put material into several of his master's furnaces, and then went and laid an information against the proprietor for charging his furnaces without notice. The consequence was, that George the Third, by the Grace of King, &c., greeted poor Mr. Robinson, and "commanded and strictly enjoined" him (all excuses apart) to appear before the Barons of the King's Exchequer, at Westminster, to answer his Majesty concerning certain articles then and there, on the king's behalf, to be objected against Mr. Robinson. These articles of accusation were thirty-one! No wonder the king wished to know what Mr. Robinson had to say. There was, besides charging the furnaces without notice, a long list of other offences, (all, however, committed by the workman without his master's knowledge,)—putting in metal after guage, unstopping a pot without notice, taking down the stopper without notice, filling five pots each day for fifty days without notice, omission of entering five hundred makings, and so on. Who can wonder that the father of his subjects was grieved at such a want of filial confidence? The king, however, had less reason to be grieved than Mr. Robinson; for

the penalties on the thirty-one offences amounted to 138,700*l*. His Majesty, through his Barons, had compassion; or rather, perhaps, it might be evident to them that to throw a man into jail for the rest of his days, after stripping him of all that he had, for such a crime as his servant beginning to make glass without his knowledge, might be going too far for even excise-ridden England. They made him answerable for one only of the accusations, and let him off for 50*l*.—liable, however, to a repetition of the same misfortune, unless he chose to stand day and night beside his furnaces, to see that none of his people violated the law touching glass. Matters have mended since that day. Absurdity and hardship do not now reach such an extreme: but the principle remains. The tyranny of interference still subsists. The morality of glass-making is still an arbitrary morality,—complicated and annoying in its practice, and mercilessly punished in its infraction. There was still enough of peril and disgust to make Anna wish that her brother would think again before he entered upon glass-making. She prevailed no further than to induce him to bespeak a short trial of the business before committing himself irrevocably as a partner. She heard so much more of the ingenuity and taste of the manufacturer he was about to join, than of his experience in business, that she was in perpetual fear that the firm would not long be able to escape the clutches of some of the revenue laws, which seemed to be lying in ambush everywhere to entrap the unwary. Her father, too, was for ever prophesying that the wilful youth would fall into some scrape, and get into jail, sooner or later.

Mrs. Durell observed her husband to be particularly gloomy one evening, when he desired to have his supper earlier than usual. He sat looking at the wall, as he always did when his mind was full of something painful. He seemed relieved when Stephen left off singing in the next room, though he would not have taken such a liberty with a dependent guest as to interfere with his singing when he was in the mood. When the spirit-bottle was put down near him, he pushed it away. This was good as far as it went. He was not going to drink away his cares, whatever they might be.—A knock at the door.—

“Let him in. It is the constable,” said Durell.

“O, then, I know. You are going to watch,” said Mrs. Durell, being aware that entering premises by night could be done only in the presence of a constable. “I am afraid, love, you are going to distress somebody that you wish no ill to.”

“I wish ill to nobody but that cursed race of informers that is as much cherished in this country as if we had a Nero over us.”

“Only about the taxes, love, surely.”

“Only about the taxes! Well, what would you have, when almost everything that is bought and sold is taxed?—Sit down, Simpson. Have you supped? We may be detained some time.”

The wife probably still showed anxiety; for he said, while buttoning up his coat,

“You have no acquaintance among the soap-boilers, my dear, that I know of.”

“Oh, is it soap-boiling that you are going to watch?”

He nodded, kissed her, bade her not sit up for him, and left her relieved.

It was true that the first errand was to a soap-boiler's,—a man who kept a chandler's shop, and professed to do nothing else, but who had long continued to carry on an illicit trade in soap. His candles bore the blame of the scent with which his near neighbours were sometimes incommoded; and his being possessed of two handy daughters saved the necessity of his having servants who might betray him, protected by that odious clause of the Act which provides that participators in the offence shall be rewarded instead of punished, if they will inform against their masters or companions. This man found that he could make, very cheap, a particularly good soap, as long as he could evade the excise; and he had, of course, no lack of customers. In his shop, he sold none but dear, duty paid soap; but nobody knew but himself how many packages went into the country from the back of his premises. The temptation was enough to overpower any man who had his opportunities. His privacy afforded him the means of trying experiments to improve the article,—too expensive a practice for makers who cannot return the material to the coppers, in case of failure, without the sacrifice of the whole duty upon the portion so returned. Relieved from the duty, he could use better and more expensive materials than the regular manufacturer can employ. Instead of barilla, or the still inferior article, kelp, he could use common salt, which requires much less labour in its application to use, and, from its smaller bulk, might be smuggled into his premises and kept there with greater safety. Besides this, he liked to be able to take his own time about the production of the article, and to use such vessels as might be best fitted for his purposes, instead of having an exciseman standing over him to see that his soap was ready by a certain time, whether it was properly made or not; and that his utensils were of the shape and size required by law; whether or not the having them of that shape and size caused waste of the material. The mere circumstance of being able to discharge the alkaline ley from the copper by a cock inserted near the bottom, instead of by pump and hand, as ordered by law, was of no little consequence, regarding as it did an operation which was perpetually occurring. This chandler had, with an easy conscience, made a pretty little competence by his illicit manufacture; but his day of prosperity was over. Some keen nose or eyes had made the discovery, and the consequence was that the constable visited his premises by midnight.

How the girls started at the first gentle tap at the door! How relieved were they when, having called from the window, they were told it was only a neighbour wanting to light his lamp! How dismayed again, when four men rushed in, the moment the door was opened, and made their way direct to the place where the sinner was pouring off his curdling soap into the troughs! There was nothing to be said,—no license to produce,—no tokens of having paid duty. The whole apparatus and product must be seized, and the man taken into custody, and the daughters left to comfort themselves, and explain the matter to the world in the best way they could. They dreaded the loss of money far more than the loss of character, which could hardly be great in a country where the population professes (judging by the duty) to use no more than 6½lbs. a head per annum; while it is well known that half a pound a week each is the lowest quantity actually consumed. In a country where three-quarters of the soap used is not

duty-paid, there can be no very deep or extensive horror of the sin of illicit manufacture. It is far more likely that the ignorant poor should be thankful to him who, in their inability to make soap at home, enabled them to buy for $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ what the law would prevent their having for less than $6d.$ Even some rich might be found who would pronounce it a monstrous thing that, while the cost of making soap is only $12s.$ per cwt., the duty should be $28s.$, and the expense of excise interference $16s.$ more; but the rich are not concerned like the poor in this matter. Not only is cleanliness,—and so far health,—less difficult, less a matter of question to them, but they pay a much smaller proportion of the duty than the poor. The duty amounts to two-thirds of the price of the soap which the poor man buys, while it forms only an inconsiderable portion of the cost of the refined and scented soaps of the luxurious. While these things are so, who can wonder at the reliance of the illicit trader on the support and good will of society, and his expectation of being blamed for nothing worse than imprudence in carrying on his work in a place liable to detection?

When the daughters had watched their father down the street, after helping to cleanse him from the tokens of his late toil, and had gone crying up to bed, knowing that a guard was left on their premises, Durell and the constable proceeded on another errand, much more painful.

Durell had received a hint from his superiors that all was not right on the premises of the glass-bottle maker, with whom Aaron was becoming connected. It was his belief that Studley had been the informer, both from the date of the occurrence, and from Studley's knowledge of the concern. Whether it was his design to implicate Aaron, could not be known yet; but, if he really believed Le Brocq to be a rich, close, old fellow, it seemed very probable that he might adopt this means of squeezing a little money out of him; or, possibly, he might nourish revenge against more than one of the family because Le Brocq had refused to be his security for the office for which he was still waiting in uncertainty. However these things might be, Studley was with the men who stealthily let themselves in at a side door, during the twilight, and hid themselves behind some planks which happened to be set on end against the wall. He was with them when they skulked about, after the workmen were gone, peeping into the closets where the stock was placed, and whispering as often as they met with anything which could possibly be construed into a token of fraud. He was the one who called them hastily back to their hiding-place when steps were at length heard approaching. He watched and followed the proprietor when he hastily passed through, with a flaring candle in his hand, as if about to light himself to some dark place. It was Studley who beckoned the men to pursue, and burst into the portion of the premises which had been so contrived as hitherto to elude the notice of the excise. There they found the proprietors, Aaron, and a trusty servant of the establishment, all at work about a small furnace.

Studley stood afar off, and was left to his own reflections, when the door was shut. Durell and Simpson presently afterwards arrived.

“Has this apartment been duly entered?” inquired Durell of the offenders. Nobody answered.

“Has this furnace paid duty?”—No answer.

At length, the elder partner began to explain.

“The fact is, we think we have devised an improvement in our manufacture; and nobody knows better than you, Mr. Durell, that it is impossible to keep any secret to ourselves in our business, while the same excisemen who watch us, see half a dozen other establishments of the same kind in a day. There is really no possibility of improvement but in doing what is constantly done,—working a little in private before we make known our discoveries to the excise.”

“The expense, too, of wasting material, which must pay duty whether we obtain the desired product or not, is an insurmountable obstacle to improvement,” observed the other partner. “You will not deal harshly with us, sir. If you do, we shall suffer for the patriotic attempt to advance our manufacture.”

“I am certain,” declared the first, “that government will gain more by allowing us to complete our experiment, than by fining us to our last shilling.”

With all this Durell had nothing to do. His office was plain. His accustomed duty lay before him,—seizure of the goods and custody of the offenders. He was grieved that his friend Aaron could not escape, though he was not one of the partners. Studley was again at hand to insist that Aaron was liable to fine or imprisonment for being found working on an exciseable product in unentered premises. The informer (for so he was) was very unwilling that Aaron should be permitted to return to his home for the night. He hoped to have seen him marched through the streets to some place of confinement. But Aaron’s peril was not such as could induce him to abscond; and he was dropped at his father’s door, after having given his promise to appear when summoned before the court.

Studley need not have grudged him his home. There was little comfort in it. Before he had well finished his tale, the next morning, and before his father had well begun the series of reproaches which must be expected to follow, a messenger from the Court appeared, summoning, not only Aaron, but Le Brocq, to answer for drawing his kiln without notice, and Anna for an illicit adulteration of tea.

Le Brocq replied only by flinging the summonses under the grate, and by a deep curse upon Durell. Anna, who had sunk into a chair, exclaimed,

“O, father, why is he to blame? How has he wronged us?”

“Never tell me that this is not all his doing;—or, at any rate, that he might not have prevented it all, if he had pleased. What is his office for,—what is his power worth,—if his best friends and his countrymen,—strangers that he ought to protect,—are to be persecuted in this manner?”

“I will answer for it, he is more sorry for us than we are for ourselves: but he must do his duty, father.”

“I should like to know what way of doing one’s duty would please my father,” observed Aaron. “Whatever may happen is sure to be somebody’s fault.”

“Whose fault was it, pray, that my kiln was drawn without notice?”

“O, father! Aaron! all this cannot be helped now. Do not let us quarrel now. We must think what must be done.”

“We must go to prison,—that is clear,—unless my father can pay the fines,” said Aaron.

“If anybody goes to prison, it must be you, Aaron. My first duty is to your mother, and my next to your sister, who has never been a disobedient child to me.”

“Pray, father, don’t,” cried Anna. “Perhaps we may none of us have to go to prison.” Her voice faltered at the last dreadful word.

“It is my belief that I can never pay the fines,” replied Le Brocq: “and if they throw me into jail, I shall find some means of telling the king that they give him bad advice who encourage him to use such means as his of getting his taxes. I would willingly have paid him three times as much as he has yet got from me for leave to follow my business in peace. There is that fellow Durell skulking about before the window now!—to see how we take our troubles, I suppose.—Anna, come back! I won’t have you speak to him. I forbid everybody belonging to me to speak to him.”

“Your own countryman, father!”

“What does it matter to me whether he was born in Jersey, or any where else? He is an exciseman, and that is enough. How in the world to tell your mother of all this!”

“Perhaps we shall not be hardly used, when they find that we are strangers, coming from a place where nothing is known of the excise,” said Anna, trying to command her voice. “Perhaps the king will be merciful when he hears all we have to say; and I still think Mr. Durell is our friend. Perhaps we may not all have to go to prison together; and, at any rate, I suppose we shall soon know the worst.”

end of the first part.

ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

TAXATION.

No. IV.

THE

JERSEYMEN PARTING.

A Tale.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

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CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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For some of the materials of this and the preceding No., I am indebted to Mr. Inglis's very interesting volumes on the Channel Islands.

The next No. will conclude my work.

H. M.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

THE JERSEYMEN PARTING.

Chapter I.

A BUSY MAN AT LEISURE.

There are but too many people in London who look upon a prison very much as they look upon any other building: but of such people few are from Jersey, or from any place where, as in Jersey, the inhabitants are prosperous, and the temptations to crime are therefore few. The family of Le Brocq had not been accustomed to see a sentence of death lightly received as implying nothing worse than a gratuitous removal to a country where, whatever other hardships there may be, there is no difficulty in procuring food and spirits. They had not been accustomed to the language of penal justice in England, where “transportation” may mean nothing more than removal to Woolwich, to sleep in a stationary vessel at night, and rest upon a broom in the dock-yard during the day, in the intervals of being watched. They had not been accustomed to see convicts adjusting their leg chain in the presence of strangers, as if it had been a boot or a gaiter; nor to hear the merriment of the disgraced; nor to witness calculations as to the economy of living in a prison for a while. To have seen an offender after conviction was to them a rare circumstance; and when such a chance had befallen, there had been a conflict of feeling between their extreme curiosity to see any one in circumstances so peculiar and interesting, and their fear of insulting the fallen.

Durell, though a Jerseyman, had lost some of this feeling through the familiarity with jails which was induced by his office. The idea of depriving a man of his natural liberty, of using force upon him in any way, was as repugnant to him as it will be to everybody a few ages hence; but, the outrage being an actual fact, the attendant circumstances had lost some of their power. If it had not been so, he would not have pronounced that Aaron might go home for the night of his arrest, as his peril was not such as could induce him to abscond. He was wrong. Aaron’s peril for working on unentered premises was of being taken before two magistrates, and sentenced to three months’ hard labour in prison. Whether three months, or three years, or three hours of hard labour, it would have been much the same to Aaron, if within the walls of a prison. Before daylight he was on the cold, foggy Thames, hastening he knew not well whither, and cared little, so long as he was out of reach of the arm of the law.

His father did not abscond, because he had a wife and daughter; but never was any man more perplexed how to choose between two dreadful evils than Le Brocq. Equal to a Jerseyman’s horror of a prison is his repugnance to pay money. Having at home but little money and an abundance of all that he really wants, he will make any shifts with his materials rather than buy. He will first impoverish his live stock rather than go to market to purchase proper food for them; and then, his live stock failing, he will impoverish his land rather than pay for manure. Thus, Le Brocq’s grand inducement to come to England having been the supposed exemption from paying taxes in money,

he could not endure the idea of laying down a heavy sum as a fine, while any alternative remained. He persuaded himself, and declared to the court, that he could not raise the money; and went to prison. This was against Durell's judgment, and in the firm persuasion that Aaron would appear in a day or two, to conduct the business and take care of the women. It seemed to him so utterly ridiculous to consider Aaron's accident of working on unentered premises as a punishable offence, that there could be no danger of the young man's being inquired after when he had been found "not at home" for twenty-four hours.

He also was wrong. Anna was alone when she drew near the prison to visit her father, after a few days' confinement. She had never been out on so painful an errand. She walked past, two or three times, in hopes that the disagreeable-looking people about the gate would have gone away and left a clear path for her: but they stood a long while, leaning against the wall with folded arms, some chatting and laughing, and others abusing the powers within for keeping them waiting. Before they had disappeared, more came; and Anna saw that the time during which she might obtain admittance would pass away if she waited to go in alone. Nobody seemed to mind her, after all, and the turnkey was civil enough; so civil, that she found courage, after a moment's struggle, to do what she considered justice to her father, and assure the turnkey, as he showed her the way, that it was for no crime that her father was there, but only for a mistake about a tax. The man seemed to think this no business of his; and indeed there was nothing in his manner to any of his charge to indicate that such a distinction signified at all.

It was a great disappointment to Anna to find that she could not see her father alone. Two persons were in the same apartment with him,—a dingy, close room, where it must be extremely irksome for three people to pass the day without employment. Anna saw at a glance how irksome it really was. Nothing but the extreme of ennui could have placed her father in the position in which she found him,—trying to play at cards with his companions. Such cards! such companions! and he, ignorant as he was known by Anna to be of modern card-playing! He had borne his part in a single ancient game of cards (though he preferred dominoes) on the gay nights of Christmas or New Year in his Jersey home, when the punch-bowl was steaming and cakes were heaped on the hospitable board round which he had gathered his family and neighbours; but his game and his card-playing notions were little suited to his present place and companionship. It was a dismal amusement here, in this cheerless room, with sordid accompaniments of every kind, and two of the players impatient at the incompetency of the third. Their voices were none of the most harmonious when first heard on the opening of the door; and when it appeared that Anna came to interrupt, Le Brocq's partner threw down his cards in a pet. Le Brocq cast away his, exclaiming—

"My dear, what are you here for?"

"Only to see you, father. But I am in the way, I'm afraid,"—looking at the peevish man opposite.

“Never mind him,” replied her father. “We have time enough and too much for that sort of thing. Why did not you send Aaron, instead of coming yourself into such a place? You know I do not like—”

“I knew you would be vexed with me for coming; but my mother was so unhappy about nobody seeing you. When Aaron comes home—But, father, we have not seen him yet.”

“Not yet! Do you mean that he has never come back at all?”

“Never.”

“Nor written? What can the lad mean? Whenever he does come back, he shall learn—I will teach him what he may expect by playing such pranks.”

He saw by Anna’s downcast eyes that she thought such threats, if they could be overheard, were not the most likely means of bringing her brother back again. They put her too much in mind of the scolding mother’s address to her offending child, which she had overheard in the street,—“Come here, you little wretch, and let me flay you alive.” Le Brocq added more gently.

“You are not afraid of any harm having happened? Have you asked anybody?”

“Mr. Durell says—”

“Durell! That you should go and disgrace our family before that man, of all people! What has Durell to do with us, beyond getting us into mischief?”

“My mother asked him, because we thought he knew most about what people do when they get into trouble with the Excise.”

“Not he. He thought I should pay the fine rather than come here. That shows how much he knows. But what does he say?”

“He does not think Aaron will come back,” said Anna, with a faltering voice.

“He has enticed him away somewhere, then. What should make the lad stay away?”

“When they run away, they get disgusted with the law, Mr. Durell says, and set themselves against it. Too many, he says, turn to secret distilling, or to braving the law in some other way. And that is what we fear for Aaron.”

“Nonsense: he is safe enough with Malet by this time, I have no doubt. He has been rope-making there this fortnight, depend upon it.”

“He was not there four days ago, as we learn by a letter from Louise this morning. We were so glad to see the letter! But there is nothing about Aaron, except their supposing that he must be managing the business while—”

“I don’t think I need read the letter,” observed Le Brocq, pushing it away from him. He was afraid of the pain of seeing what his daughter might say about his being in prison. “Your mother is happy for to-day, I suppose, now she has heard from Louise?”

“Not very,” answered Anna, with a tear or two. “Father, she is always crying out for Louise to come. She seems as if she thought everything would be right if Louise was here. But I am sure I dare not think of it. It is something to think that one of us is safe; and why should Louise be more safe than anybody else, if she came? There are other snares yet, Mr. Durell says; and where no stranger can do anything hardly without falling into a snare, is not it much better that Louise should stay away? Is not it, father?”

“To be sure. It was mistake enough for us to come.”

“Then, you will let us go away again? May I tell Louise so?”

“O, yes. Tell her that, as soon as you hear of my being buried, you shall see if you can raise money enough to get back to Jersey; and that I charge her—”

“Buried! father.”

“Yes. I am very ill, and it is my belief that I shall die here. So your mother is very unhappy?”

“Yes: but you don’t mean that you are really going to die? I am sure something might be done to persuade the king to take some of your stone-ware, if you have not the money. I am sure they would let you out in that way. And my mother is so miserable! Every footstep that I am apt to take for Aaron’s, she thinks must somehow be Louise; and then she thinks of how proud it would make her to see Louise’s husband setting all right, and—”

“Poor child! She taunts you with having no lover here! No wonder you look for Aaron back! She finds fault with you again for sending away poor François, who would indeed have been a great help to us now. But no wonder you look for Aaron back!”

“It was such a disappointment last night, father! There was a soft tap at the door, just before we went to bed; and we never doubted its being Aaron. I told him through the key-hole that I would open the door in a minute; and when I did, it was Mr. Studley. And now he will have it, from what I said, that Aaron is with us sometimes; and he would stay—”

“Your mother would not let him in, to be sure? She would not let the rascal in?”

“She could not lawfully prevent his coming in; but she would not allow him to stay there. I never saw such a spirit in her before. But we heard him outside for three hours after. If I could have persuaded my mother to go into the back room, so that he could not have heard her cry, I should not have minded it so much.”

“What! has the fellow overheard our lamentation? I thought your mother had—That should never have happened if I had been at home.”

“Then I wish you would come home, father. Never mind the loss. Never mind the ruin, if it must be ruin.”

Le Brocq answered doggedly, as he had always done before, that he had not the money. If any body had told him, when he took the business, that, independently of his scrape with the Excise Court, he should now be without money, he would not have believed it, after all that had been held out to him about the quantity of money he should make. It was not from spending. He had pinched and toiled more than he had ever done in Jersey; and all to plunge himself deeper. If he had been out of business, dressing his wife in velvet, and feasting on foreign fruits and claret, he would have paid less to the state than he had done as an employer of workmen, denying himself and his family, meantime, anything beyond the commonest comforts of life. It was the paying several times over that was enough to ruin any man. The workmen could not pay the taxes upon everything that they ate, and drank, and wore. Their wages were raised in proportion; so that their masters paid. No man should judge of his fortune by his returns till he knew what he had to pay in wages. O, yes; he charged these wages in the price of his bottles, so that the bottle consumers paid in their turn: but he, as a consumer of other things, paid in his turn, in like manner; till, among so many outgoings, he had no money left. And all for what? To contribute his share towards the expenses of government, which he might have paid, if he had been properly asked, at half the cost, and a hundredth part of the pain and trouble!

“But you did not like that way of paying when you were in Jersey, father.”

“Because I was told there was a better, and was fool enough to believe it. It is the most shameful hoax, the making me pay as I have paid since I came here! You need not look so frightened, as if I was talking treason,” he continued, seeing that Anna was uneasy at his being overheard complaining of being hoaxed in state matters. “I am saying no harm of the king; for he loses more than I. If I am hoaxed, he is double-hoaxed, as I could easily prove.”

“Could you? Then perhaps,” said Anna, timidly, “perhaps, if you told him so—”

“Ay; I could set the case plainly enough before him, if I could see him; but there’s the difficulty.”

“I will ask Mr. Durell, and he will ask the Board, I dare say,” exclaimed Anna. “We could say that you would not detain his majesty very long,—not more than half an hour, perhaps.”

“Not so much; but I am afraid that would not do. If you consider how many hundreds of people are in prison, or otherwise ruined by the Excise, it seems hardly likely that the king should give half-an-hour to each.”

One of the inmates of the apartment, who was keeping himself awake with playing Patience with the dirty cards, while the other dozed, here put in his word.

“If his majesty gave his time to every body that is injured by the Excise, there would be no time left for any other business; and you are simple people if you do not know that.”

“There is another thing,” observed Le Brocq. “If the king was on our side, there are his ministers to convince. Now, it seems to me that his majesty might not exactly carry in his head all I might say, to repeat to them; and it would be as well that he should have it in black and white.”

“O, a letter to him!” cried Anna, brightening. “Let me write down to your speaking, father; now, while I am here; and I can put it into the post-office as I go home. They say letters are most sure to reach people when they go through the post-office.”

Anna laid aside her bonnet, put her hair back from her face, and looked round for something wherewith to dust the shabby, rickety table. The card-player picked the pocket of the sleeper of his handkerchief, and handed it to Anna, who used it without scruple, rather than that the king should have to open a dirty letter. But where was the paper? If she went out to buy a sheet, perhaps they would not let her come in again; and her father had none. The card-player again offered to be their resource. He proposed to let them have a sheet of paper, and the use of his ink, pen, and penknife for a shilling.

“Money again!” exclaimed Le Brocq. “The English go on ruining one another, even in jail, with asking for money, money, for ever. I shall pay away no more money, I assure you, sir.”

“Well, then, money’s worth will do as well. That young lady has brought something for you in her basket, I believe?”

“I have, sir. I have brought something for my father, as you say; and for no one else. When we lived in Jersey, it was a pleasure to make and bake for those that wanted it, and to give it even before they asked for it. But what I have brought is for my father’s eating, and not to pay away for a sheet of paper, when it happens to be his need to write a letter. Father, I like this place less and less for you. I did not think there had been a place, even a prison, where people who sit at the same table would so take advantage of one another’s wants.”

“Even a prison!” said the man, smiling; “why, ma’am, I hope you don’t think the worst people are found in prisons? Let me tell you that those whom you would call the worst have the sense to keep out of prison. If you had lived in London as long as I have, you would see how a prison has lost its bad name; as it ought to do, if it is to be judged by the people it holds.”

“I should be afraid it would give a bad name to the people it holds, instead of getting a good one to itself,” observed Anna, sighing.

“No, no. You Jersey people know nothing about our English prisons. In your island, a man must be a really bad man, or have done some one very bad deed, to get himself shut up. But here, what do you see? Almost all the prisoners are in for debt, or for

crimes against property, or for revenue offences. The first and last are not reckoned crimes in a country where it is so difficult to a great number to keep clear of money entanglements and of tax-gatherers; and under the other head come those who would not have done worse than their neighbours, but for such want as you do not see in Jersey. In our prisons, you meet more of the poor and the ignorant than of the guilty; and, this being seen, prisons are losing their bad name, as I said, among the people. You will hardly speak ill of them, from this time forward, your father having been in one, and hundreds more as good as he.”

Anna saw that there must be something very wrong about all this. It perplexed all her notions about guilt and punishment. She had till now looked upon her father as an injured man, and regarded him as an innocent person, detained by mistake in a horrible place, and among vile companions; and now to be told that the only mistake was in her notion of a prison, and that her father was no more than an ordinary inmate, dismayed her so that she desired to hear no more. She spread out Louise’s letter, and proposed to write on it in pencil what her father had to say to the king; and to copy it out fair at home. The card-player found it to no purpose to reduce his terms. His first overcharge had deprived him of a customer for his dingy paper and dusty ink. The letter was as follows:—

“I, John Le Brocq, have something to say to your majesty which may prove of equal consequence to us both, and to many more. I am sure your majesty cannot be aware how much harm is done by the way in which your majesty’s taxes are collected. I really think that if any one had set himself to work to devise a way for taking as much as possible from us people, and giving as little as possible of it to you the king, and hindering manufactures and trade at the same time, he could not have hit upon a cleverer scheme than that of the excise system of taxation. As for myself, I have only to say, that I would rather have paid twice over as much as your majesty has received of my money, than have been deluded and cheated as I have been; of which, however, I beg to add, I believe your majesty entirely innocent. The fault is in the system, sir; and I believe you did not make it. But here I am in prison. My son is gone away, we do not know where; and my daughter is under prosecution, having (as I will say, though she holds the pen) never had an evil thought of your majesty in her life. All this is from our having fallen into mistakes about taxes which I am sure we never made any difficulty about paying. Not having been told what a large capital I should require for advancing the tax on the stone-bottles I make, and for paying the high wages my men must have to buy taxed articles, I should have found it difficult to get on, even if I had not been fined for breaking laws which I defy any man to learn in a day; and which, I must say, do not tell much to the credit of those who made them. And how much of this goes into your majesty’s pocket, after all? for that is the chief point. I, for one, know of a crowd of fellows that have to be paid out of the money in question for spying and meddling about our premises in a way that hinders our work terribly. One in ten or twenty,—ay, one in fifty of these men would be enough to collect what we should have to contribute, if we each knew our own share, and might pay and have done with it. And these men are not all that profit by the plan. It affords a good excuse for making people give higher prices than the tax of itself would oblige them to give. Your majesty may have heard what the tavern-keepers did when a tax equal to twopence a bottle was laid on port wine? They clapped on sixpence a bottle

directly; something in the same way that we put a higher price on our stone pots, which are not taxed, to make them more nearly equal with the bottles which are taxed. This saves us in part from the spite of the glass-bottle makers, who, I fancy, were the parties that got our article taxed; but it has the effect of stinting the use of them. Your glass-bottle duty brings you in a very little more than 100,000*l.*, and that on stone-bottles little more than 3000*l.* a-year; while, if there were no such duties, there would be so much traffic in foreign mineral waters, and other liquids that people cannot get on account of the duty, as would much improve the affairs of the shipping, and the wealth of your majesty's subjects, who would then easily make you welcome to more than the sums named above, if you could not do without them. Then the army of excisemen (who can hardly be a sort of persons much to your majesty's taste) might be employed in helping instead of hindering others' business. Then again, please to think of the injury to thousands of men from trade being cramped and put out of its natural order. To make soap and glass and my particular article, there is much coal wanted; and for paper-making, iron machinery; and for all, houses, and furnaces or coppers. Now, if the trade in each were not cramped by the dearness of the article, there would be more work for the woodcutter and the carpenter, for the miner and coal hewer, for the brickmaker and the shipmaster, and a great number more. O, your majesty may depend upon it, however much may be said about the riches and glory of this kingdom, it might be richer and more glorious, and far happier, if your people were allowed to pay to the state in a less wasteful and pernicious way; while you would find your advantage in it before the year was over. If you should please to consult your ministers about this, and to order them to let me out, I think I could engage to show them the difference, as far as my own share is concerned: though the experiment is by no means a fair one when tried on only one article. If your majesty thinks of travelling, perhaps you may manage to take Jersey in your way; and there I think you will own that the advantage of steady natural prices and a free trade are very evident in the comfortable condition of the people."

"Had not we better stop here?" asked Anna. "I am afraid if we make it longer he will not read it."

Le Brocq was sorry to leave off just when he was about to describe his own country; but he acknowledged the propriety of doing so. Anna just slipped in a postscript of her own.

"Perhaps your majesty will consider the mischief of a man like my father being shut up and treated like a criminal, in such a place as a prison, where he can only play cards to pass the day, (and that with disagreeable people,) instead of being industrious in his family, as he would wish. Perhaps this may lead you to take pity on my mother, who, for all her Bible can say, is worn down with grief; and on my brother, who is a wanderer from fear of a prison; and on me, who am in the like danger. Next to Him who bindeth and looseth, your majesty is our only hope,—not only for present pardon, but for altering the laws, that we may not fall into the like trouble again.—Your obedient servant,

"Anna Le Brocq."

“How much of that letter do you fancy the king will ever read, if he gets it?” asked the card-player, smiling.

“It is hardly long enough to tire him much, if it is nicely copied; and ours is very good ink,” replied Anna.

“But I mean, do you think he will find it worth attending to?”

“They say he used to write frequent letters to his father and mother when he was young; and so he must know that when people write a letter, they like to have it attended to.”

“Then, if I write to you, ma’am, I shall expect an answer.”

“You can have nothing to say to me which you cannot say now to my face—an opportunity which we have not with the king,” replied Anna, quietly. She then turned to her father, and offered to bring him dominoes, which she thought he would like better than those cards. She also hoped she could borrow a book or two from the Durells. Permission was given to try; but she was warned that her request might be refused if it was really Durell’s doing that the family were persecuted and distressed. She knew that this was so far from being the case, that Durell himself was under extreme vexation from an imputation of Studley’s, that he had allowed himself to be bribed in his office by the Le Brocqs; but there was no hope of persuading her father yet that Durell was not an enemy. She succeeded better in another direction. She got leave to consult with her mother, and see whether the fine could not be raised. Le Brocq really looked and felt very unwell; and the unlimited prospect of confinement, dust, disagreeable companionship and dominoes, was far from cheering.

The sun now shot its level rays upon an opposite roof which glittered back into the apartment.

“This is just the weather and the time for seeing Coutances Cathedral,” observed the prisoner, as Anna was about to leave the room. She also was just thinking of Jersey, its wide views and pure atmosphere; but she had said nothing to tantalize him who was confined in a space of twenty square feet.

“You may leave me Louise’s letter, after all,” said he, forgetting what was written on the back. He was chafed at the circumstance, but would not read the epistle before witnesses. He would wait till Anna’s next visit; but, as soon as she was gone, he gave away the supper she had brought him, and rejected all amusement in his pining for news of his blossoming orchard, and of the fruitful pastures of his native island. While he settled within himself that Anna was an unexceptionable daughter, his mind’s eye was occupied with Louise, hailing her graceful kine, or pacing on her pack-horse through the deepest of the lanes. When he looked round him, he wished that it was dark, that he might fancy himself there.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter II.

KNITTING AND UNRAVELLING.

The pottery business was not brought quite to a stand in consequence of the master's absence. The women could not undertake to carry it on as usual; and there was not money enough coming in to pay the people's wages: but Anna was on the spot to read the letters that came; it was thought a pity that the horse should either be sold or stand idle; and, what was more, the boy Brennan seemed to have gained ten years in spirit and wisdom since he had been taken notice of by Durell. One of the workmen, who had been on the premises a good many years, and who cordially disliked Studley, was willing to do his best to keep the concern going, either till Aaron should appear or Le Brocq be released. The little fellow at the lathe remained, and one furnace was employed, just to execute the most pressing orders, and preserve something of the credit and custom of the establishment. Nothing more than executing orders was attempted; for it was very undesirable to add to the stock. Anna's wish was to dispose of enough of this stock to pay her father's fine and the law expenses, which together made no small sum: but, whether from a suspicion respecting the fair dealing of the family, arising from Le Brocq's imprisonment, or from the absence of all the parties who could push the business, no sales could be effected. Durell put her in the way of advertising in the newspapers; from which nothing accrued but the expense of the advertisements. Brennan exerted all his ingenuity to embellish his handywork; but his endeavours brought no new customers. He was chidden by the man under whom he worked for his fancies about new patterns. He was grumbled at by his comrade at the lathe for keeping him after working hours, to finish some fresh device. He was gravely questioned by his mother about spending a portion of his hard earnings in buying some new runners which formed a remarkably pretty ring-pattern for his jars; and, after all, nobody bought a jar or a flask the more. Hour after hour, Anna sat amidst her stock, growing nervous over her work in listening for footsteps. Day after day, she came in to dinner, without any news for her mother, and almost afraid to meet her inquiring eye. The stock was offered at a low price. If she could have sold the duty-paid part of it, her father would have been injured by being compelled to sacrifice his interest upon the advance of duty he had made for his customers. As it would not sell, he was more injured still. He could not get back the principal of this advance. It seemed as if Le Brocq could not escape in any way from being injured by this excise system. So it was; and so it is with all who in this country buy any thing, or make any thing, or live in any less primitive manner than Robinson Crusoe or Little Jack.

There was another reason for Anna being nervous over her work, besides listening in vain for customers. The affair of the tea had never come to an end. From the quantity of business before the court, and from other circumstances, it had been postponed; and one or two of Anna's friends had tried to persuade her that she would hear no more of it. But she was too anxious to be easily comforted. She knew Studley too well to believe that he would stop short of injuring the family to the utmost. She found that

she was legally guilty; and she suffered little less than if she had been morally guilty. Day and night was the idea of approaching exposure and punishment before her. There were but few people,—not half-a-dozen of her nearest neighbours,—who would believe in her utter ignorance of the excise laws; and her character for fair dealing would be gone. If Aaron had not run away, she almost thought she should. She could now fancy how people might be driven to destroy themselves. The old feeling which had embittered her childish disgraces now came back upon her,—that if she could but get out of this one scrape, she would go somewhere where she could never get into another. If she forgot her apprehensions for an hour in her concern for her parents' troubles, they came back to plunge her into redoubled misery. It may be doubted whether many criminals suffer so much in the prospect of their trial and punishment as did this innocent girl from the consequences of a factitious transgression. They who prepare the apparatus for such transgression can little know what demoralization and misery they are causing, or they would throw up their task.

She knew Studley best. She was the least surprised, though infinitely the most dismayed, when the crisis came at last. She heard her mother's heavy tread in the shed below, and could trace her progress to the foot of the stairs by the jingling among the wares.

“Anna! Anna, child!” exclaimed the old lady, out of breath with her exertions. “Here is Mr. Studley! you must come down; he won't leave his business with me.” After an interval, “Anna, child, do you hear?”

“Yes, mother.”

“Then, are you coming?”

“Yes, mother.”

“Well, make haste.”

Studley was there in his capacity of messenger. His errand was not, to his taste, so good as if he had come with a levy warrant, or a body warrant;—a summons was but a poor infliction; but, such as it was, he enjoyed it.

“When must I go, sir?”

“To-morrow, at eleven. You must be at the court by eleven precisely, remember.”

“And may I take any body with me, sir?”

“Do you mean as counsel, or merely as a support to your spirits?”

“I have nothing to defend, sir. I have no other excuse than my not knowing the law; and I can as well say that myself as get anybody to say it for me. I only mean that I should not like to be quite alone, if the law allows me to take any friend with me.”

“O, if you can persuade any body to appear with you, I have no idea that the court will make any objection.”

“Will you please to stop a moment, sir? Is it the same court that my brother was to have appeared in, or some other?”

“Bless me, what an idea! You do not take me for a servant of the police magistrates, I suppose? It was before two police magistrates that your brother was to have gone; and I summon you before the Excise Court of Summary Jurisdiction. There is all the difference in the world.”

It might be so; but to Anna’s ringing ears and bewildered comprehension they were much alike. Studley applied himself to explain. The police magistrates were, according to him, far less awful personages, inasmuch as they tried all sorts of people for all sorts of offences; while the Commissioners deputed from the Excise Board to sit as judges in the Court of Summary Jurisdiction concerned themselves in nothing but excise offences or complaints. They had a vast deal of business to do, and sat twice a week for nine months in the year.

“Then I think,” observed Mrs. Le Brocq, “there must be more breaking of the excise laws than of any other kind of law.”

“There is a great deal of that sort of thing. Miss Le Brocq will find herself by no means solitary. The court settled eleven hundred cases last year, do you know?”

“Well, if I were the king,” said the mother, “I had rather go without some of my money than have eleven hundred of my subjects brought into one court in one year, for not paying me properly, through mistake or otherwise.”

When Anna could think, she remembered her former determination to ask Mrs. Durell to go with her before the court. She lost no time in proceeding to her house to make the request.

“Sit still, Stephen,” said she mournfully, when she saw that Stephen was trying to shift out of sight, as was his wont when any of her family were known to be near. “Sit still, and put away your meek look before me. You have nothing to fear from any of us, even if I held proof in this right hand that you had done what we thought you did. We are ruined now. We have no heart to defend ourselves, or to try to punish our enemies.”

“Pooh, pooh! this is all about the tea. They have been troubling you about the tea,” said good Mrs. Durell; “and so you can see nothing but what is dismal this afternoon.”

“Indeed, Mrs. Durell, it is too true,” replied Anna, struggling with her tears. “I just came to ask you to go with me to-morrow morning—to be at the court by eleven o’clock.”

“I have no objection in the world, my dear, but this. It might not be thought well for the surveyor’s wife to be with you, perhaps. It might give occasion for something being said. Is there no other friend who might do you more service?”

Anna had no other friend. She could not think of taking her mother into a place so strange to her, and to see such a sight.

“Such a sight! Why, what sort of sight? How my husband would laugh at you, if he were here! One would think you were going to be tried for some foul crime. You will be surprised to find what a simple, easy thing it is, after all you have been fancying. O, I will go with you, my dear, if you can’t find a better person.”

“I do not think we need mind your being a surveyor’s wife,” said Anna, “when we consider how the court is made up of people that are connected together. The people of this court accuse me; and the people of this court summon me, and bear witness against me; and the people of this court judge and punish me. I never heard of such a court before; and I cannot say I think it a just one.”

“There you are only of the same mind with everybody else, Anna. It is a kind of court which might better suit some slavish country than Great Britain. Without finding any fault with the gentlemen who sit in it, one may venture that much. The gentlemen understand their business very well, people say; and there is great convenience, in so complicated a system, in our having a place where excise matters may be settled speedily and cheaply, in comparison with what they might be under some other plan: but all this does not mend the principle of the court; through which the court might, if it chose, ruin half the traders in London. It is too great a privilege for any set of men to have,—that of meddling with thousands of traders in the heart of the empire, and taking the accusing and judging and punishing all into their own hands. There now! there’s a sigh! as if they were conspiring against you. If you will believe me, it will be over in a few minutes; and everybody will forget all about you the moment you have turned your back, and a new case is called on.”

“No; not Mr. Studley.”

“O, yes: Mr. Studley too; and, what is more, you yourself. You will have forgotten what took you there by the time you come away again. At least, I never went there without seeing or hearing something that took me out of myself for the whole day after.”

There was not much comfort in this; and Anna found she must wait till the next day to know fully what it meant. Mrs. Durell’s next piece of advice undid all the little good she had done by making light of the occasion. She thought the intended visit to the prison had better be deferred till to-morrow afternoon, or the day after; as Le Brocq would perhaps lose his night’s rest in thinking about what was to happen in the court. This proved to Anna that she was not the only one who saw something serious in the affair.

How should she dress? If she wore her best, it might be taken for defiance. If her everyday dress, (now shabby,) it might look like wishing to attract compassion. Mrs. Durell assured her that there would scarcely be time for any one to note her dress; but she did the kindest thing in inducing Anna to look altogether Jersey-like, so that her true account of herself and her error might be corroborated by her costume.

“Did not your mother say kindly that she would teach Stephen to knit?” said Mrs. Durell. “Ay, who should forget old quarrels, if not such good people as you? And think of the benefit to Stephen to have such a resource! to have something to employ his hands upon in rainy weather, when my Jack is gone to school! It would be a good time to begin this evening, I think, if you like to take him home with you. Stephen will be glad to do his part towards the forgiving and forgetting, I have no doubt.”

Anna saw at once what a happy thought this was. Her mother liked nothing so well as teaching people to knit; and if a blind person, so much the better;—it took twice as long. It would help off this heavy evening, and save Anna from the *tête-à-tête* with her mother which she dreaded nearly as much as what was to follow. Stephen seemed on the eye of a yawn at the proposal; but he knew his own interest too well not to seize this opportunity of placing himself on good terms with the Le Brocq family; and he consented to accompany Anna home.

He made himself particularly agreeable, and fancied that he might have been more so if they would but have invited him to sing: but he did not choose to offer it, remembering where he had once volunteered a similar service before. As he could not sing, he told some of his adventures, by bits and snatches, in the intervals of letting down stitches and waiting to have them taken up again. The reserve of the old lady melted away under the glow of conscious benevolence, while imparting her own favourite accomplishment to another; and Anna relented as she saw her mother cheered; and the faster in proportion as she became so herself.

“Nothing is so strange to me,” she said, after a pause, when the evening was far advanced, “(and I cannot help thinking that it is a thing too strange to last,) how people shut their minds up,—how much they hide from one another, when they are brought as close together as face to face in water.”

“Ay, mistress, there you have Scripture for its not being so for ever.”

“And other signs, too, besides that Scripture saying. But, for an instance of what I mean, Mr. Stephen, here are you sitting between my mother and me; and for want of a window in your breast, we know no more of what we want to know, and of what you could tell us in two minutes, than if you were at one end of the world and we at the other.”

“I thought of that,” replied Stephen, “when I saw John Baker standing to take his trial for murder, when he had been beside me, and both of us like brothers, for a month. There, thought I, stands the man, with the secret in him: and when he was questioning and cross-questioning one and another, it seemed a ridiculous beating about the bush, just for want of a window in his own breast, as you say. But I wonder what makes you

think it will ever be otherwise. If men were all made alike, I grant you there would be a chance of all being known; for they are the fewest, I fancy, who can never be melted into telling everything. I am sure when an old comrade gets me beside him under a sunny hedge, or when Mr. Durell and I are over our spirit and water, there is nothing that in some moods I can keep to myself.”

Anna inwardly wished that it might be so when he was sitting between two knitters, sociably learning their art.

“But,” continued Stephen, “there are, and always will be, men whose taste is for secrecy. There will always be men who will no more make a clean or an open breast than they would pull their hearts out.”

“They will be read, like others, for all that,” Anna said. “The longer men live together, and the more their eyes are turned upon each other, the more they learn to gather from signs. See how much doctors learn from marks which signify nothing to us, and the deaf from countenances, and the blind from tones of voice, and then tell me whether, if we were as observant as all these together, we might not read more of a man’s mind than we now think of. And if we also study the make of the mind as some have learned to do, we may get to know of things unseen, something in the way of the wise men who can tell us, years before, when a comet is coming, —”

“Or of the common man who knew the exact spot where a lion was, miles off, before it could be either seen or heard.”

“How was that?” asked Mrs. Le Brocq, with some scepticism in her tone.

“He saw a large bird of prey in the air, so far off that it seemed but a speck. It hovered, which showed that there was a prey beneath; and it did not drop, which showed that something was beside the prey which prevented the bird from seizing it; and, from the nature of the country and of the bird, that something could be nothing but a lion; and a lion it was. It was by putting things together that the man knew this; and it is by putting things together that men will be known, if ever they are known.”

“I am sure it is much to be wished that they should be,” sighed Anna.

“Well, now, I don’t agree with you there. I think half the fun in life lies in men puzzling one another, and watching one another in their puzzle.”

“It has been the amusement of your life, we have some reason to think: but we have only too much cause to wish that hearts could be laid open to man as they are to God. The greatest support that we have in God is in being sure that he knows all; and if men could read us as thoroughly, and be sure that they read aright, there would be an end of our troubles. My father would be seen to have meant no mistake, and I to have never had such a thought as cheating the king; and we should know where Aaron is, and exactly why he went away. It seems to me that men make almost every sin and trouble they suffer under; and that it is done by making mysteries and laying snares for one another.”

Mrs. Le Brocq had hitherto looked rather less solemn than had been her wont since the afflictions of the family began: but now her tears were falling on her knitting needles, and Stephen overheard a little sob. He entreated her not to vex herself, and to hope that all was well with Aaron, and so forth. But this is not the kind of consolation which will satisfy any mother's heart; and Mrs. Le Brocq said so.

"If you would comfort me," said she, "you must tell me where he is. How should I believe that all is well with him when there is the sea where he may be drowned, and the workhouse where he may find his way as a beggar, and plenty of prisons where he may be shut up, and snares spread every where for him to fall into? I never hear of any evil happening but I think that he may be in it; and when I pray—"

"O, mother, hush! Don't speak so, mother."

"I say, child,—it may be a sin, but I can't help it,—I have often lately in my prayers fixed a time when I will despair of God's mercy if my boy does not come or send: and always as the time passes away, I do the same thing again; and cannot set my mind either to give him up, or to hope with any certainty to see him more. You are a good child to me, Anna; and all that you say about trusting is very right; and I dare say it comforts you, though I have overheard you crying in the night oftener than you know of. But for myself I say, if you wish to comfort me, tell me where Aaron is."

"Well, then, I will tell you where he is," cried Stephen, throwing away his handywork. "I don't know what I may get for it; but I can no more help it than I could help telling anything to poor John Baker, when we sat under a hedge, as I said, and he kept all his own secrets while I was telling him all mine."

Neither Anna nor her mother spoke a word. It had never occurred to them that Stephen could know more of their nearest concerns than they did themselves.

"I will tell you where he is," continued Stephen, "and you may trust me for knowing; for it was I that helped him off, and put him in the way of a flourishing business. But you must promise me to tell nobody what I say. That is, I suppose you must tell Le Brocq, but not till he has engaged to let it go no farther."

The promise was readily made, and then Stephen told that, so far from its being reasonable to expect Aaron when any one approached the house, Aaron was far off on the sea. He was plying in a smuggling vessel between one of the Channel islets and the south coast of England.

"Aaron a smuggler!"

"Yes; and with all his heart. He had very little reason to like the law, while he was within its bound; and was not at all sorry to get out of its bound. Would it not be just the same with your father, now, if he could get away? Has he any reason to like the law? and do you think even he, though he is an orderly man enough, would hold it any great crime for a persecuted man to go beyond its reach?"

“I call it coming within the reach of the law, not going beyond it,” said Anna, mournfully. “The way to get out of reach of its oppression is to go back to Jersey; and that is what I trust my father will do. O, why did not Aaron do that?”

“He was afraid of being laid hold of either by the law or by your father,—and Aaron has no taste for tyranny, either way. The open sea, with a lawless calling, is much more to his mind. While he was here, he had no more chance for freedom than a midge in a field of gossamer; and now, he is like a roving sea-bird, lighting on a rock to rest when he likes, and then away again over the waters.”

“You will not deceive us any more, Stephen, by your way of hiding ugly things with fine words. The plain truth, dress it up as you will, is, that Aaron is living by braving the law. You know that he cannot show himself fearlessly among men: you know that he comes abroad at night because his works will not bear the daylight. You must have taken advantage of him in his distress, or he could never have thought of such a step. But I think no distress that I could ever fall into would make me follow your bidding, seeing how you have already deceived us to our ruin. O, why did not Aaron go back to Jersey?”

“I wish, mistress, you would be a little less hard upon me. I did the best I could think of for your brother. When he came to Mr Durell’s to learn what was likely to befall him, I thought it only kind to tell him, as soon as Durell had turned his back, that there were means at hand for getting away, and leaving the tread-mill far behind him.”

“So far we are obliged to you, I am sure,” observed Mrs. Le Brocq. “I should not have liked to see my boy on the tread-wheel.”

“So I knew, and I asked no reward beyond what it cost him nothing to give. I went with him myself, and introduced him on board a boat that you may have chanced to see off Gorey in the season. It is all very well to go and get oysters; but there is another more profitable sort of business to be done in those seas,—and will be, as long as the Customs duties of this country remain as they are. So, Aaron was off with a fair wind and tide; and I suppose he may now be cooling himself in a sea-cave, without leave of the law, since the law took him off from broiling himself beside a glass furnace.”

“Does Mr. Durell know where he is?”

“He never asked me; and, depend upon it, he will never ask you.”

“And what was the reward you desired of Aaron that it cost him nothing to give?”

“Only just a promise that I should hear nothing more of certain caps and handkerchiefs that you lost, once upon a time. You will have a letter from Aaron, (when he can send it so that you shall not know whether it comes from east or west,) to ask you, for his sake, never to mention that matter more.”

“So you did take them! I do believe you are a smuggler yourself,” declared Anna. There was a tremor in her voice which showed Stephen that she was more or less alarmed at sitting next a smuggler and a thief.

“Don’t be thinking of shifting your chair, Miss Anna. My pranking days are past. A cursed bitter wind, one cold night, inflamed my eyes, and brought me to the pass of being scarcely able to tell bright moonlight from pitch darkness; and then I could be of little use on the sea. I tried what I could do for our company on land, by discharging an errand or two for them, one of which was at your farm. But the hue and cry you made after me through all the island spoiled my game; and there was nothing for it but giving up and coming here, that I might not hurt those I could not help. So my pranking days are over.”

“Then you are only half blind? Where is our linen? How did you get away?”

“I shall tell you, because you cannot recover the goods, in the first place: in the next, your credit is none of the best, just now, and would not overbalance my denial in any court; and lastly, I consider that I have paid off my debt in saving your brother. Come, come: no sighing over my plain-speaking, or I shall leave off speaking plain. I am full three quarters blind, and so only one quarter a knave. I can see the candle on the table; but I should not know you from your mother, except by the walk and the voice. I can see a field from an orchard, but I could not have found my way if your brother had not first guided me. As for your linen, I did not steal it to make money by. It is bleaching on certain rocks beside the sea, or worn by some of the sun-burnt damsels that Aaron knows by this time,—who can keep watch as well as any coast-guard, or broil a fish handily when there is notice that the boat is creeping home through the land-shadow. They wanted a supply of such things; and I promised to bring some readymade: but I went to the wrong place. In England, one may carry off a crammed washing basket, and nobody thinks it much of a wonder; but in Jersey, one might almost as well steal the island charter, to judge by the hue and cry that was made after me. I never saw such simple people.”

“That comes of not making crimes of things that are innocent in themselves,” said Anna, proud of her native island. “If it was treated as a crime to make soap or burn glass in one way rather than another, people would soon grow careless of so common a thing as crime, and make much less difficulty about breaking the law whenever it suited them. They are the most moral people who know of no crimes but those which God has called such, and who, while they pray ‘lead us not into temptation,’ take care to add none to the temptations that God thinks enough for their strength.”

“But how did you get away?” asked Mrs. Le Brocq. “I was awake a long while that morning, and I never heard you stir.”

“That was because I was gone, I suppose. Knowing that it would take me some time to get down to the shore, I only waited till you all seemed sound asleep. The finding the latch of the door was a long job, wishing as I did to make no noise. When it was done, I expected to have come back again, for I made a great stumble on the threshold.”

“I wish you had done it as you came in,” observed Mrs. Le Brocq. “It would have been a token to us to look more closely after you.”

“If you had dogs,” continued Stephen, “they were so obliging as to be very quiet. There was only one creature that made a great noise,—and that I had no objection to,—an owl in the ivy about your chimney. I could not for the life of me help standing to shriek like an owl, to keep it up. I have often thought since how I stayed leaning over the palings, hooting, when my proper business was to slink away. Well, when I had got down to the brook-side, it took me some time to gather the linen together.”

“We have often wondered how you managed to carry it all away.”

“It was a heavy load for some way; but I left the half of it on the ridge, when I was once clear of your place,—left it for my comrades to fetch when I had got down to the boat, and told them where to go for it. Luckily for me, you had been washing a large bag—”

“My wool-bag!” exclaimed the old lady, piteously.

“Your wool-bag, was it? I am glad it had wanted washing that time. I crammed it full of the smaller things, and the rest made a great bundle tied with a coil of Aaron’s cord which I found in his coat-pocket. You remember I had his clothes on?”

This was a fact not likely to be forgotten.

“I went down with the bag, and left the bundle just on the off-side of the ridge. The boat was dawdling within hail, all as it should be, though they had nearly given me up; for I had been so long groping about that it was nearly time for you early Jersey people to be up and out of doors. Two of our comrades went up for the bundle, and carried—I dare say you will not believe what I am going to say now?”

“Why not?”

“Because in Jersey you are not up to the smuggling ways which are well enough understood everywhere on the south coast of England. We expected that you would do as the people do there;—if your horses were found tired in the morning, or any convenient thing taken away, look round to see what was left in exchange, or trust that something would come, and hold your tongues about the trespass. Supposing you understood all this, we sent up a choice cask of spirits and a package of tobacco, and some prettier things for you ladies than any we took away. These were to have been left for you on the ridge; but we soon saw it would not do.”

“We should never have guessed,” said Mrs. Le Brocq; “and indeed I do not well understand it now. But how do you mean that it would not do?”

“By the fluster you made, our people saw that it would not do,—that you would have us followed, if we left any sign of who we were, and what part of the coast we had been upon. It was easy to see that you were not the folks who could take a hint. There were your fowls fluttering, and men’s and women’s voices shouting, and Le Brocq

thumping with his great stick, and one of the poor young ladies leaning her head against her cow to cry.”

“Did they see Louise do that?”

“Miss Louise, was it? Yes, they saw it; and very sorry they were when they found how the thing was taken; but it showed them that it was time to be off. So they crept round under the rocks till they could stand out among the boats from Gorey, being pretty sure that they would pass unquestioned through the Thames and Medway men, who know something of what must happen on the Channel waters while the Custom-house interferes between the French and English as it does. Now, Miss Anna, let me have the pleasure of hearing that you believe my story,—that you perceive that I am not a common thief, and that you will fulfil your brother’s wishes in sparing me all future allusion to my Jersey adventure.”

“I cannot help believing your story, Stephen; and I only wish the King and his Ministers could hear and believe it; and see how, through their way of taxing, a man that scorns being a common thief is proud of being an uncommon one. Yes, Stephen, you are a thief, and you have helped to make Aaron one. You were a thief towards us, and Aaron is one towards the Government, getting his living as he does by robbing the State of some of its dues. God pardon those that made dishonest men of you both! I had rather see Aaron on the tread-wheel for an offence of mere heedlessness than out on the free waters on a guilty errand. You have done him no real good, Stephen. Boast no more of it.”

“I swear that I have,” said Stephen, with his usual good humour; “and I can do more: I can make the good extend to you. I know you want to get rid of some of your stock; Durell told me so. I can put you in the way; but Durell need not know that. It is a pity that your bottles, and your pretty stone spirit-casks should stand piled upon one another here, of no use to anybody, while Aaron and his party are bringing over liquors—”

“Now have done, Mr. Stephen. One might think you were a tempting spirit, sent to try us. You would sink my mother and me next, I suppose?”

“Not sink, but raise you, my dear;—get your father out of gaol, your fine paid (for I suppose it will end in your being fined to-morrow)— Plague on it! here is Durell,—come for me, I suppose. Very kind of him to come himself! Always kind, I am sure: but if he had left me another half hour—Not a word before him, remember.”

“I was afraid you would find Stephen a bad scholar, Mrs. Le Brocq,” said Durell, taking up the knitting from its dangling position over the side of the table. “Offer to give Stephen a lesson in anything, and it always ends in his giving you a story instead.”

“That is what I have been doing to-night, indeed,” replied Stephen. “But you never saw two people more in need of a story than these ladies. They are as frightened about this little matter of to-morrow—”

“My wife sends her love to you, Miss Anna,” said Le Brocq, “and she has been thinking, ever since you saw her, about going with you to-morrow; and she has made up her mind that it will be against your interest, that she, a surveyor’s wife, should appear with you. She adds that if you still urge it—”

“By no means,” said Anna, quickly. “I can go alone. If it is God’s will that I should have no friends, I trust it is His will that I can do without them.”

“You will never be without friends while my wife and I live,” replied Durell, calmly; “but I was going to add, for my own share, that I could not think of any member of my family appearing in that court as the friend of any offender. We know perfectly well that you are as innocent of any intended offence against the Government as my boy Jack; but the offence is real in law. I owe duty to the Government, and it would disgrace me in my office, it would be a failure of duty to appear to countenance any transgression of the law which it is my business to enforce. One of the penalties of such an office as mine is to have to speak and act in this way to a friend,—to one whose offence is merely legal, not moral—but you see—”

“I see.”

“Well: you shall not go alone. Brennan’s mother is a very decent good woman; and she is so obliged to your family for your kindness to her boy, that she will go with you with all her heart.”

“Do not say ‘with all her heart.’ Say rather because you asked her,” said Anna, feeling the humiliation of owing this kind of obligation to a stranger.

“Nay. Hear from the boy himself, if you will, whether his mother is not pleased to be of use to you; and if there is anything, my dear, that we can do for you without compromising my duty, only send for me. If you want any more law knowledge, I may be able to help you, knowing how little is learned and wanted in Jersey; and if you should happen to fall into further trouble, you may look far and wide for a better comforter than my wife. Come, Stephen, are you ready?”

Anna’s heart sank as they closed the door behind them. She and her mother looked at one another without speaking. They had been beguiled for a time by Stephen’s strange stories; but, this being over, they now found that the best thing they could do was to go to bed.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter III.

A MATE FOR MOTHER HUBBARD.

Do criminals feel glad or sorry when they wake and find it broad morning, two hours before their execution? Are they thankful to have been beguiled with sound sleep, or had they rather have had broken slumbers, finding again and again that it is still dark, or only just dawning yet? To those who love their beds, and dread the coming of the hour of rising, and nothing worse, there is something pleasant in being thus repeatedly reminded that it is not time to get up; but how it may be when a worse evil impends has perhaps never been told. Anna's experience (and she felt that her case was very like a going to execution) could not throw any light upon the matter; for she did not sleep at all.

Breakfast was as much out of the question as sleep. She did not pretend to take any, even to please her mother, for she had something to do which would occupy her whole time till Mrs. Brennan came for her. During the night it had occurred to her that there could be no harm in carrying with her a copy of her father's letter to the King, lest that which she had put into the post-office should not have reached its destination. The employment was good for her. It prevented her being in quite so disagreeable a state of palpitation and thirst as she might have suffered if she had been quite at liberty for watching the clock. The Brennans came at last before they were expected.

"Your boy with you, Mrs. Brennan! Do you mean him to go too?"

"He is so very anxious, ma'am, to be of use to you; and it struck him that you might wish, in the middle of the business, to send for somebody, or to have some kind of messenger at hand."

Anna shook her head. Whom could she send for at her utmost need?

"I wonder," said Anna, when she had put on her shawl, and was casting her last fluttered look around her,— "I wonder whether I should take a pound or two of that tea with me. The gentlemen may require to see it."

"I should be disposed, ma'am," said Mrs. Brennan, "to leave it to the informers to show the article that they complain of. It is not your part, I should think, to be aiding their cause."

Anna had opened the door of the cupboard where her packages of adulterated tea were ranged as neatly as every other article which the house contained. She now quickly closed it, and seeing that there was no further pretence for lingering, solemnly kissed her mother and departed.

As they walked, Mrs. Brennan showed herself to be a partisan of Anna's. In this leaning towards the defendant she was only like other people. Where the King is

prosecutor, not paying for his law, the popular inclination is usually against him; and especially when he sues for his moneyed rights. This indicates the policy of contracting instead of multiplying such proceedings to the utmost.

“I am afraid the judgment will go against you, ma’am,” said the good woman, “and it is the best kindness to tell you so beforehand. There is little hope for you against the King, especially when he makes other people pay his lawyers. A gentleman that I knew was fined 50*l.* and the costs came to 500*l.* In this court, however, there are often no costs, and the business is done pretty quickly and cheaply,—which does not, as I say, make it the less a pity that it should have to be done at all. You are lucky, too, ma’am, in not having to do with a jury, as juries were, on excise cases, some time ago. Ma’am, the jury used to have two guineas and a dinner when they found a verdict for the Crown, and only one guinea, and no dinner, when they found for the defendant. You may suppose the accused seldom got his cause.”

“And yet juries seem generally to be thought good things for the accused,” observed Anna.

“Some people consider it a great stretch of power to do without them in excise cases, ma’am; but, dear me, there would be no end of trials by jury, if all that are informed against were so tried. The court would have to be open all day from the first of January to the last of December, and a thousand people a year would be ruined for law expenses. Besides, they say that the quick judgments given by these gentlemen, on the information of their own servants, strike a wholesome terror into folks, without which the laws would not be observed.”

Anna could answer for the terror. Whether it was wholesome was another question.

How she reproached herself for her terrors about her own fate when she witnessed some of the cases presented this day in court! She could have been amused at some, from the apparent frivolity of the charges, if the consequences had not appeared more grave than the accusations: but there were others which could be viewed only with intense commiseration.

What had Dennis Crook done that he was called upon to pay 4*l.* 15*s.* 4½*d.*? Dennis Crook was a paper-stainer, and had neglected to pay the duty of 2*l.* 7*s.* 8¼*d.*, and he was therefore called on for the double duty in order that the single might be recovered, with costs. Poor Dennis declared that he had told the collector that he would pay the duty, and the costs with it, the first day that some money which was due to him should come in. It was very cruel of the collector to bring him here, knowing that he had no wish to evade the duty, and that the bringing him here was enough to ruin his business. It had got abroad already, and he had lost two customers by it. God forbid that he should be so inconsiderate to the person who had brought him to this by not paying him to the day! Dennis could not pay the penalty till this person yielded him his due,—not a bit the more for being brought here; but that person should not be exposed by him as he was exposed in this court, to the destruction of his business. If he should never pay another shilling of duty to the king, the court might ascribe it to his difficulties being laid open in this way,—difficulties

which might have been got over easily enough if the court had not stepped in between him and his customers.—The court did not see what it had to do with all this. The single duty, with a small increase for costs, was squeezed out of poor Dennis, who went away, pulling his hat over his eyes, and saying that this would be the signal for his landlord to turn him out of the little shop in which he had carried on his business for many years; and God only knew where he was to establish himself next.

What could have brought hither that respectable elderly woman, who looked as if she could never in her life have broken a law or a rule? She came to save her son from a prison, if it might be within her small means to do so. On his coming of age, she had given up to him the small tenement she possessed. She had better have kept it till her death. He had been seduced into a “speculation,” and had set up a private still. The still and all the spirits on the premises were seized, and the mother was now here to pay the penalty of 100*l.* which was just half of the little portion she had destined for her daughter. She knew that it was more likely that she should have to maintain John than that he would ever repay this 100*l.*, for his character was gone. She cast down her eyes while she held out the money, with a trembling hand, and did not speak to John as they went away, though he looked as if he longed above everything for a word from her. Mrs. Brennan found that much explanation was necessary before Anna could believe that all this ruin was caused by the act of distilling spirits without the leave of the government.

A widow, in shabby mourning, with a babe in her arms, was quietly crying in a corner. She had sold her furniture by auction, and had neglected to get a license. She had better have kept her furniture; for the penalty swallowed up nearly all the proceeds of the sale. Anna thought this the most cruel levy of a tax she had ever heard of; for this poor woman would not have sold her furniture if she had not been in want. To be compelled to pay for permission to do what was in itself a hardship, was a stranger piece of oppression than Anna had witnessed yet,—much as she had seen. She followed the widow, to make sure of the facts, and found that the poor woman had been on the point of setting up a little shop, and sharing a cheap lodging with a brother: but now that her money was almost all gone, she could see nothing before her but selling fruit in the streets; but, in that case, she must look about for some one who would take care of her baby, while the other two little ones must tramp the streets with her. If she had but sold her furniture in any other way! But her brother advised an auction, and had taken upon himself to be auctioneer; and how could she suspect what would happen?

The wonder was how those to whom the public money came at last could enjoy it if they knew of its being wrung in ways like these from the ignorant, the simple, and the distressed. The old and obvious question recurred,—why not ask the nation for the money that is wanted, instead of filching it? Why not settle openly how it is to be paid, and take it directly, as rent is taken, or as contributions for any other object are collected? Surely no objections to this simple method of taxation could long stand when our great nation of buyers and sellers had once found the comfort of natural and regular prices, of wages not arbitrarily and uselessly raised,—the luxury of being rid of the oppression of Custom-houses and Excise courts, and of the plague of a spreading host of revenue spies. Little could be said of the dignity of the

circumstances out of which the State funds arise by any one who had seen others of the cases which Anna witnessed, and which really amused her, and beguiled her of her apprehensions for a time. It seemed ridiculous that the king should, by his officers, be seriously complaining of being injured by one man selling pepper without a license, and another removing wine without a permit, and a third having more brandy in his cellar than he declared he had, and a fourth having rum under a certain strength among his stock, and a fifth forgetting to keep an entry-book, and a sixth tying up his pasteboard in a wrong way, and a seventh having neglected one night to put down how much black tea he had sold in small quantities. It did not seem very dignified in any government to concern itself and worry its subjects about such matters as these. Anna could have laughed once, when the mention of black tea brought her back to a consciousness of her own awkward predicament.

What she had seen had much abated her horror, however. She was able, when called upon, to say that she found she had committed an illegal act, but that she was not the least aware, at the time, that she was doing anything improper, as was shown by her offering some of her thorn leaves to persons who were passing through the field. She could not think it very kind of those persons to pass by without giving her warning of what she was doing. She saw, to be sure, that they looked grave upon her; but how was she to know why, unless they told her? In Jersey they would not have treated a stranger so.

“And pray do they make tea of thorn leaves in Jersey?” asked one of the gentlemen.

“Very rarely, because tea is so cheap there that it would not be worth while; but anybody may do it that likes. I should not have thought of doing it here but for the dearness of tea; and I never could have supposed that the custom of the country was first to render tea so dear as to tempt us to make it for ourselves, and then to punish us for so making it;—a thing we should never otherwise have thought of.”

Studley, on whose information, supported by witnesses, the whole proceeded, smiled maliciously, and said that the young woman showed what family she belonged to by her enmity to the Excise. It went in the family; her brother having absconded to escape an excise charge, and her father being now in prison in consequence of one. This statement made the expected impression. How could the gentlemen do otherwise than think ill of such a family of delinquents? Studley followed up the matter by declaring what trouble the Excise had with the Le Brocqs. There was no other set of people that he had had to watch so closely; no other premises that he had been obliged to enter so often.

“It is very easy to watch people, Mr. Studley,” said Anna, “without showing that they have done wrong; and entering premises by day and night, week after week, does not prove that anything amiss is found there.”

“It answers another purpose, if I may say so, gentlemen,” interposed Mrs. Brennan. “If an excise officer has a spite against a family, nothing is easier than to take away their character by frequent search, which I believe is what Mr. Studley is trying to do

with this family. I wish, gentlemen, that you would ask Mr. Studley what he has found in any of his searches from the day that Mr. Aaron went away.”

“Impossible,” said one of the commissioners. “We have nothing to do with the character of these people; as you, Studley, ought to have remembered before you entered upon matters with which we have no concern. The charge was admitted. That is all we have to do with.”

Studley was ordered to recover a fine,—a small one, for the gentlemen saw something of the nature of the case,—and to destroy or see destroyed the adulterated tea. Anna humbly listened to the unnecessary admonition not to repeat the offence, and then begged the gentlemen to let her father out of prison, where his health was suffering materially from the confinement. This kind of petition must be sent to the Board, accompanied by a medical certificate of the state of the prisoner’s health, one of the gentlemen was informing her, when Studley interfered to allege that Le Brocq was well able to pay the fine,—better able than a hundred men who had petitioned the Board in vain for their release.

“If that be the case,” said a commissioner, who had a little attention to spare from the case which his colleagues had now called on,—“if that be the case—Is it the case, young woman? Tell me the truth.”

“If my father’s stock could be sold, he might pay,” Anna declared: “but nobody comes to buy; and nobody will come now that Mr. Studley has taken away our good name by following us for evil as he has done.”

“He must do his duty. I can hear no complaints against him for doing his duty. If he has given you cause of complaint, you can have redress by applying in the right quarter.”

“But, sir, what can I do about the fine? My mother and I are willing to work night and day to raise the fine, if we knew which way to turn ourselves: but there seems to be so much danger in employments here that we are afraid to begin any new ones.”

“O, any one will tell you the law, if it is that you are afraid of. What sort of employment were you thinking of?”

“My having been asked for so much of my own tea made us think of selling tea and groceries: but I have seen people fined to-day for selling pepper without leave, and having tobacco in a private room, and forgetting to set down at night what they sold in the day, and also for finding that they had more on hand than they had given an account of. I should be afraid, sir, to sell groceries. But there is another thing that was partly put into my head, and partly thought of by myself, owing to our having a great quantity of duty-paid bottles unsold. My mother and I have always been used to make cider, and some kinds of sweet wine. There is talk of a great deal of ginger wine being likely to be drunk this year, for fear of the cholera. We might make it at little risk, as ginger is so cheap an article, and we have the bottles.”

“Well: you can but try. You are aware, I suppose, that ginger is not so cheap here as you can get it in Jersey? Ginger pays duty here.”

“And sugar is taxed too, and so is your little matter of spirit, ma’am,” interposed Mrs. Brennan. “You must not go to work, reckoning the cost of all your materials at what you might get them for before you came here.”

“She may easily learn the prices of things,” said the condescending commissioner; “and then she has only to take care to give in her name and place of abode, and of her rooms and utensils; and to renew her license (which will cost two guineas) every year; and to give notice when she intends to draw off her wine; and to be careful not to send it out in less quantities than a whole cask containing fifteen gallons.”

Anna looked dismayed, and asked,

“And should we have anything to do with Mr. Studley in that case, sir?”

“If his superiors find that he has reason for suspicion, he may enter at any hour, provided he takes a constable, at night. He may also break walls and pull up floors, if he believes that anything improper in his line is concealed there; but you would be careful to avoid dangers of this kind, and get yourself visited daily, according to law, to obviate suspicion.”

“Every day, sir!”

“Yes; if you make wine. If you only retail it, once in twenty-eight days is all you are subject to; and the annual license for mere retailing is only a guinea, the notices and entries being of the same kind required of makers. If you combine the two—”

“I cannot, sir. I dare not. Your gentleman would be bringing me up and fining me once a week, sir.”

“O, you could not get very deep into any scrape, I assure you; the state gets only between two and three thousand pounds from all the sweet-wine makers in the kingdom. There are four who pay less than 1*l.* a year, and no more than six who pay above 100*l.*; and only twenty-three makers altogether. Even the retailers are under nine hundred in number. It is an insignificant concern altogether.”

“To the king, perhaps, sir; but not to me, if I have to pay tax upon what my wine is made of, and a tax for making it, and a tax upon the bottles that hold it, and a tax for selling it; and if I am liable to be watched and tormented by Mr. Studley, or men like him. I think, sir, the government might really give up such a vexation, if it brings in so little—so very little.”

“And employs a good many people like Mr. Studley, at a hundred a year,” added Mrs. Brennan. “I think, ma’am, you must give up your idea of making wine.”

“Yes, indeed,” replied Anna. “Perhaps, sir, as it is for the king’s sake that I am prevented getting money for my father, as I otherwise might; and as you are one of

those who manage these affairs, you will not refuse that this letter should go to his majesty. It is from my father, sir, copied by me, and asking no charity at all, but only consulting about what is best for both.”

The commissioner was unwilling to let such a curiosity escape. The letter was wafered, so that he could not ask to glance his eye over it. He would fain keep it, but did not like to deceive the poor girl with false hopes. Anna was pleased to see him hesitate. Studley stopped his laugh of ridicule. Mrs. Brennan could scarcely refrain from nodding triumphantly at him. The commissioner turned from them to say a few words to his colleagues, so that Anna could not see his face. He soon returned, quietly saying,—

“I am not sure that I can get this letter into the king’s hands; but you may leave it with me; and if your father cannot pay his fine by this day week, you may come here again, and we will consult upon his case. Studley, the fine to which this young woman has made herself liable is remitted. It is clearly a case of remarkable ignorance. The adulterated tea must be destroyed, of course. You will see to it; but treat her gently, if you please.”

The commissioner then explained to Anna that all who were discontented with any decision of this court might seek redress in the Court of Appeal. Anna found it difficult to understand exactly what was meant. The only clear idea she carried away was that nobody ever applied to this Court of Appeal; so that most people began to wish that it might be done away as one of the useless burdens of the Excise. She was sure that she should not be the next person to appeal. The court might be done away for anything she had to say against it. Its being seldom or never applied to seemed to show that the court she was now in was thought to conduct its business well; but it appeared to her that it would be a happy thing to sweep away both, and all excise jurisdiction whatsoever.

“Where is Brennan?” asked Anna, when she and her companion had made their low curtsies, and turned round, with lightened hearts, to go away.

“He was off some time since,” Mrs. Brennan replied; “to run and tell your mother how matters were going, I dare say. They have been merciful to you, ma’am; and I give you joy.”

“O, Mrs. Brennan, I think I never will dread anything again. I have often said so before, finding what I most dreaded come to a very little. I never was so frightened in my life before; but I really will try never to be afraid again.”

She spoke a moment too soon.

“And what do you want with us pray, Mr. Studley?” inquired Mrs. Brennan, perceiving that that person walked close to Anna, as if he regarded her as more or less in his custody.

“Going to discharge my duty,” replied Studley. “The adulterated tea is to be publicly destroyed, you know, as bad books are burned by the common hangman.”

“Publicly!” repeated Anna, in consternation. “Where? How?”

“In your father’s yard. There cannot be a more convenient place for a bonfire.”

“Do you mean to burn the tea in sight of all the neighbours?”

“That depends on whether they choose to look. I shall certainly not try to hang up any sort of blind.”

“I wonder at you, ma’am,” said Mrs. Brennan, “that you go on asking him questions, just to give him the pleasure of making sharp answers.”

Anna said no more. She was thrown back into her former state of trepidation. It was as much as she could do to walk straight. Mrs. Brennan seemed to think it a waste of time (or perhaps she considered it bad for Anna) to keep silence for so long a space. She began talking of her boy, and fished for a few compliments for him; but her companion seemed strangely careless of what she was saying.

“What a smell of burning!” Mrs. Brennan exclaimed when they drew near the pottery-yard. All three looked round for tokens of fire; and Studley observed that one might have thought the furnaces were all employed, as they had been in his time. Smoke was coming out of the window of the kitchen, and even oozing from under the door. Anna really believed that the place was on fire, and exclaimed accordingly; when Brennan put his head out at the window, and Mrs. Le Brocq opened the door. Both seemed terribly heated, and made a display of scorched cheeks which would have done honour to a Christmas fire. It was evident from their looks that nothing was the matter.

“Let me in,” said Studley, in a voice of authority. “Clear a space in the yard for the fire. Boy, call the workmen (if there be any now-a-days) to clear the yard for the burning; and if nobody is on the premises, fetch some of the neighbours.”

“What may you be pleased to be going to burn?” asked the boy, briskly.

“My tea,” faltered Anna. “Come this way, Mr. Studley, and I will show you the cupboard where every grain of it is; and if you have any kindness in you, you will be quick with the job, and finish it before the neighbours can gather about us. Mother,” continued she, as she entered the kitchen, whose atmosphere was rapidly clearing, “what have you been about? The hearth is piled up with ashes as high as the grate, and the grate is heaped half way up the chimney; and you look ready to faint with the heat and the vapour.”

“Mistress won’t mind it, since we have got done in time,” observed the boy, cheerfully; and then he began humming a tune. Studley had meanwhile advanced in slow dignity to the place which Anna had indicated to him. There was nothing in it. While he took an astonished survey of the shelves, Brennan went on from his humming to singing, and his words were some that every child is familiar with,—

“And when she came there,

The cupboard was bare,
And so the poor dog had none.”

“The poor dog, ha, ha!” repeated Mrs. Brennan, laughing. “And so the poor dog had none! So he put his tail between his legs, and slunk away, I dare say. Did not he, my dear?”

Studley was now obliged to do something very like this. The boy had been quick. The moment he heard the tea condemned to destruction by the court, he ran with all speed to discharge Studley’s errand for him. The last packet of tea was smouldering when he heard Anna’s exclamation that there must be a fire somewhere. Studley would have Mrs. Le Brocq’s tea-caddy brought down; and he fingered and smelled the contents. They were perfectly unexceptionable; and nothing remained for him but to go away. He felt to his back-bone the slam of the door behind him, and to the bottom of his soul the significance of the buzz of voices that came through the open window as he passed it. That Anna should escape thus easily was the last thing he had designed. And what an impudent little wretch that boy was, to be insulting him,—so lately his superior at the pottery,—with his nursery rhymes! All day, nothing would stay in Studley’s head but

“The cupboard was bare,
And so the poor dog had none.”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter IV.

FRIEND OR FOE?

Though Anna's adventure in the court had ended much less unpleasantly than she had expected, she had no strong inclination to appear upon the scene again. The words "this day week" were for ever on her mind; and hour by hour she revolved the possibilities and improbabilities of her father being able to discharge the fine within the time specified. The first day passed over pretty well. Her mother and she were full of the satisfaction of her own escape. On the second day, they consulted about advertising their stock again, and wished they had done it yesterday. Anna went to get the Durells' opinions; but nobody was at home except the maid, who could or would give no account of her master and mistress, and was not over civil in her manner. Night came before the question of advertising or not advertising was settled; and the next morning, Mrs. Le Brocq seemed rather disposed to have an auction, at which the stock, the household furniture, and the pottery business might be all sold together, so that the family might be off for Jersey the moment Le Brocq should be released. Anna was alarmed at the idea of an auction, fearing some difficulty or danger about the duty. Mr. Durell had offered to assist her with his knowledge of excise law, in all cases of need; and once more she sought him. This time the Durells were at home: but the maid scarcely opened the door three inches, and was positive that her master and mistress could see no person whatever, even for two minutes. Jack's face was visible for an instant, peeping under the maid's arm; but, on being spoken to, he disappeared behind her skirts, and would not be persuaded to show himself again. Mrs. Le Brocq was more bent than ever on having the auction when her daughter came home bringing no opinion against it. She had got a glimpse of the prospect of seeing her Louise again, and had much to say that had been said often before on the hardship of not having seen poor Louise ever since the first week of her marriage. Who could tell whether, if this auction should go off well, she might not, even yet, be with Louise before her confinement? She was not sparing of her reproaches to Anna because she would not begin her preparations this very evening: but Anna would do nothing without consulting her father, whom she could not see till the next afternoon; and so the third day passed without progress being made towards paying the fine, and there was every prospect of the fourth elapsing without any further advance than the formation of a plan. Her mother hurried her away, when the time drew near for her visit to her father; and so did her own inclination; though she hardly expected that the prison-doors would be opened any sooner on account of her impatience. Her mother and she had better have been more reasonable. She had not been gone more than four minutes, (and she had to wait ten at the prison gate,) before a stranger arrived on business. He came from the Board of Excise, on a little affair which would be easily transacted,—over in a quarter of an hour; there was no occasion to trouble any of the family further than just to show him the way to the stock-room. His people were behind with the cart; and he had desired them to be as quiet as possible, and give no trouble. He was an excise officer, come for the purpose of levying the fine for which Mr. Le Brocq was now imprisoned.

Nothing could exceed the old lady's consternation. Her first idea was that it would be politic to carry herself high. She therefore declared that she could not think of admitting a stranger on any such errand. Mr. Durell was the gentleman they always employed on this kind of occasion.

The officer half smiled while he explained that it was the Board, and not traders, who were said to employ officers on excise business; and the Board must choose what officers it would send on particular pieces of service. He was aware that Mr. Durell was an intimate friend of the family; but Mr. Durell would not be seen by them on this occasion.

“And now, ma'am, here come our people. If you will just show us the way, as I said, we will not trouble you to stay. You may trust the affair to me. I have orders to be considerate; and you shall have no reason to complain. I will look in upon you when we have done, and leave with you the order for release, which you will allow me to wish you joy of.”

No such thing. Mrs. Le Brocq saw no joy in the affair. Here was Studley: there was the cart with another attendant; and her husband's beautiful jars and filterers were being handed into it, to be carried off. She declared she would appeal to the neighbours. She would raise the neighbourhood.

“Let me advise you not, madam. I have desired my men,—Studley, be more quiet, will you?—I have desired my men to make no disturbance: and, if you make none, the neighbours will take us for customers, and you will be spared all disagreeable remarks. Be quick, Studley!”

Mrs. Le Brocq loudly exclaimed that they might well desire quietness when they came like thieves to carry away her property. They had good reason to fear being mobbed; and mobbed they should be. The officer quietly and civilly showed his warrant, and cited that clause of the Act which provides that all persons who oppose, molest, or otherwise hinder any officer of excise in the execution of his duty, shall respectively, for every such offence, forfeit two hundred pounds. The good woman dared do nothing worse after this than turn her back upon the trio and their occupation, and shut herself into her house. There she sat, rocking herself in her great chair, and not even knitting, when, in less than a quarter of an hour, the officer tapped at the door, and requested admittance. At first, she would not hear; and when she dared be deaf no longer, she became lame, and made him wait, on account of her rheumatism, as long as she possibly could. It gave him pleasure, he said good-humouredly, to deliver to her the order he held in his hand, his little business being now finished. Her hands were too busy, as she pretended, fumbling under her apron, to be at liberty to take the note. She bade him carry it back to those that sent it; and when he declined doing this, she sullenly nodded towards a table where he might lay it down. He obeyed orders, touched his hat, and departed.

She was still rocking herself in her great chair when Anna returned.

“O, mother, what has happened now?” cried Anna, seeing that matters had gone wrong during her absence. “Mother, speak! Have the Excise been upon us again?”

“To be sure: carrying off all we were going to sell by auction. They want to put me into prison, too. I shall never see Louise more.”

“O, mother, did they say so?” cried Anna, sinking into a chair. “I hope, at least, they will put you beside my father;—and me, too,” she faltered, as the idea crossed her of her being left alone on the premises, her parents in prison, and the Durells, from some cause, inaccessible. “Mother, how could they have the heart to tell you that you must go to prison? Was it Studley? I suppose it was Studley. And when, mother? When—”

Her mother let her go on tormenting herself till the frequent repetition of the question “when?” compelled her to admit that nobody had exactly said that she was to go to prison. But they could mean nothing else by robbing her of all that she had left. By degrees it came out that Studley had been very quiet, and in fact had said nothing at all; that if he had, it should have been the worse for him; that the officer who was set over him would not soon forget his visit, for Mrs. Le Brocq had shown him, when he offered that bit of paper (lying on the table there) that she would not touch with a pair of tongs anything brought by him.

Without the intervention of a pair of tongs, Anna took up the paper. Minute after minute, she stood with it in her hand, her mother not condescending to take any notice. She leaned against the table, and again began to ponder it, the intent of the whole proceeding opening upon her more and more distinctly.

“I could wish, mother,” said she at length, “that the gentleman had asked you to read this paper, or had told you something of what it means, that we might not seem to the Board to be ungrateful. As far as I can make out,—I am pretty sure,—our fine is paid, and my father may come home directly.”

Mrs. Le Brocq was in due amazement: but, when she had taken out her spectacles, and read the order for the release of her husband, his fine being paid, she comforted herself about her own manners by observing upon the improbability of her receiving any civility from the Excise; and that, after all, there was no occasion to thank them for letting her husband out of prison, when they had done him such a wrong as ever to put him in. She now found that it was possible for her to get as far as the prison; a thing hitherto not to be thought of. Anna would gladly have left her behind, so impatient was she of every moment which must elapse before her father could know of his release. Her mother was terribly long in getting herself ready for her walk; and such a walk Anna had never undergone, except in a dream. At last the moment came when the door of the well-known apartment was opened before her.

She had hitherto seen her father only at an hour when she was expected; and then he was always sitting at the table, or pacing up and down the room. She now found him lying at length along a bench, his face resting on his hands.

“He is ill!” cried Anna, pressing forward.

“Far from it, ma’am,” said the man who had offered to sell her a sheet of paper. “No worse than usual, ma’am. That is the way that he spends most of his time, except when he is expecting you; and then, who could look doleful?”

Le Brocq had started off his bench on hearing Anna’s voice, and shaken himself, to get rid of his sloth or his emotion, whichever it might be that kept him lying there. When he saw his wife, he was sure that something remarkable had happened; and most probably of a disastrous nature: for Mrs. Le Brocq’s leading taste, next to knitting, was for telling bad news. He was not sorry, however, to find that good news would serve her turn when there was no bad to be had.

It is surprising how people get good manners without teaching,—some very suddenly, on particular occasions of their lives. Le Brocq had been considered by his prison companions an under-bred, churlish sort of person: but now he was full of courtesy, from the moment he knew that he was going to leave them. He hoped they would find the improved space and air they would have in consequence of his absence a great advantage. He sincerely trusted that nobody else would be put there to intrude upon them as he had done. He was flattered at the groaning sigh and melancholy look with which this was received, not suspecting the nature of the regrets felt by his comrades,—regrets after the dominoes which he had not forgotten to pocket, and after the relief they had enjoyed from the irksomeness of double dumbie, if they played whist at all. They would now have willingly buried in oblivion all the faults of his playing, for which they had often pronounced him to his face incorrigibly stupid,—all would they gladly have forgiven and forgotten, if he could but have stayed to save them from double dumbie. But it could not be. Le Brocq was on the point of saying that he should be very happy to see them if ever they should chance to be travelling near his place in Jersey; but he remembered in time what was due to his family, and what had arisen already out of the visit of one questionable personage. He was sorry now that he had beguiled some irksome hours with exact accounts, perhaps too tempting, of his farm, and of his mode of life in Jersey, with all its advantages; and when his prison-mates asked what he meant to do with himself now, he gave an answer implying an intention to remain in London,—not a little to the dismay of his wife and daughter.

He seemed, when he came out, to be suddenly smitten with London. Brennan was waiting outside, with a smiling face. He had come, thinking he might carry his master’s clothes-bag. Le Brocq was sure there was no such place as London for having little services done for you, almost before you can wish for them.—The party crossed one of the bridges. Really, he believed there could be no such river in the world as this river in London; and he defied anybody to match St. Paul’s as he saw it now.—What a beautiful sunny evening it was! How the sun glittered on the water! His wife, who was puffing and blowing, wished it was not so hot; and Anna ventured to hint that he might perhaps think the more of these things from having been shut up so long. For her part, she liked a strait of the sea better than any river. This hint threw her sober father into an ecstasy about a strait of the sea; notwithstanding which, it was still difficult to get him off the bridge. When this was accomplished, however, the shops and carriages did as well; and a bunch of fresh flowers at a greengrocer’s made him mentally drunk. Anna, thinking him now in the best mood for friendship, paused

when they came to the turn which led to Durell's house, and proposed that they should go round, and tell their friends the good news.

"Ay, to be sure," replied her father. "It would be a pity to go home yet,—such a fine evening as it is."

Brennan observed that he could still carry something more, now he was so near the pottery. If Miss Anna would trust him with the basket, he would step on with the things. Anna gave him also the key of the house-door, and asked him to see that the kettle boiled by the time she should arrive to make tea. She saw by her father's countenance that the very words were delicious to him, and he owned as much as that nothing gave such an appetite as the fresh air.

"But I am sure Mrs. Durell is at home," said Anna, when the little girl once more declined letting anybody in. "I saw her cap as I passed the window. Tell her, my dear, that if she is offended with us, we wish she would tell us why; and, whether she is offended or not, I should like to see her for two minutes, to tell her something that I am sure she would be pleased to hear."

The little girl looked behind her, and Mrs. Durell appeared, thin, and anxious-looking. She cast a glance up and down the street before she spoke, and then merely said that there was no quarrel; that her husband was ill and out of spirits; she would thank them to be so good as not to come in now; and as soon as she could, she would call in upon them, or send to know if Anna could spare her a quarter of an hour. But not now.

"We could not now, Mrs. Durell. Here is my father—going home with us to tea, you see. We have a great deal to tell you; and perhaps we shall have but a short time to tell it in. You must come and talk with us about Jersey. But I am sorry Mr. Durell is ill. Is it only just to-day? or has he been ill long?"

"He has had enough to make him ill these ten days. God knows what will become of us all! But he has done nothing wrong, Anna, if you will believe me. Good bye, my dear. I cannot tell you any more now."

"Poor Mrs. Durell!" sighed Anna, as she left the door. "I wonder what has happened now. I am sure it is something very terrible. But I knew she could not have quarrelled with us."

"Poor woman!" said Le Brocq, complacently. "This evening would be hardly the time to quarrel with us, however it might have been while I was away. They will keep on good terms with us now, I dare say. Poor woman! She looks very pale. She looks as if she had been shut up. She cannot have been much out of doors lately, I fancy. Ah, ha! Here we come near the soapery. We are near home now. There is the great ladle still! You have let the ladle stand, I see."

"I hope it will stand there long after we are gone out of the way of the soapery and the pottery, and all the places here," Anna ventured to say.

What could be the reason that they could not get into the house? Brennan was not visible and the door was locked. On looking through the window, the clothes-bag might be seen, and the fire was blazing, so that he had certainly been home. What could have become of him and the key? It was impossible to be angry with anybody this evening; so Anna found a seat for her mother in the yard, and she and her father went to the rear to look at the river from the wharf. There was so much to see and admire as the boats put off and returned, so much wondering how that wooden-legged waterman would manage to keep his footing, so much speculation as to whence such and such vessels came, and whither they were going, that tea was forgotten, after all, till Brennan came running to tell them that it was ready.

“There, now; this is what I call comfortable,” declared Le Brocq, as he entered the parlour, and saw, not only tea, but a pile of hot cakes and a jar of flowers. “How in the world do you get such flowers here? They might have grown in a Jersey meadow.”

“They seem to me the same that you admired in the shop as we passed,” said Anna. “And I know the pattern of the jar. It is one that Brennan has been making after his own fancy.”

Le Brocq could not but have thought this jar a very beautiful one, in any of his moods. This evening he was disposed to pronounce it the most elegant that had ever proceeded from any pottery; but Brennan modestly disclaimed this. It did not come up to the one that put the idea of this into his head,—one that he had seen at the British Museum.

“Bring the other one that you made after this,” said Anna; who explained to her father that there was one other jar which Brennan himself thought superior to this; and that a third had come off the wheel this morning which was likely to be the best of all. These jars were all the boy’s own property, as he had paid by extra work for the clay and the use of the apparatus. The boy did not bring the second jar, for the good reason that it was no longer within reach. He had parted with it to the green-grocer for the flowers, and money enough to buy these hot buttered cakes.

It was difficult to make the boy sit down to table near his own flowers; and then he was too modest to be easily persuaded to taste his own cakes. It was not for himself that he got them, he said.

“Did you ever get anything for yourself?” Anna inquired of him.

“O, yes, ma’am; many a time.”

“What was the last thing you got for yourself?”

“Some new runners for the jars. If you please to look, ma’am, this here is a new pattern quite.”

“If you had a great deal of money, what would you do with it?”

“I would belong to the Mechanics’ Institution, and learn to draw; and then I might get the prize,—a good many guineas.”

“And what would you do with those guineas,—help your mother, or marry a wife, or what?”

“I would get some marble to cut. Marble is very dear, they say; but I saw a good many marble things in the British Museum.”

Le Brocq, always ready with a word against Durell, wished he had taken the boy anywhere but to the British Museum, if he must meddle with him at all. He had heard the proper place to take boys to for a holiday was Sadler’s Wells. If he had gone there, Brennan would have had no extravagant notions about getting marble, or anything else that would come in the way of his being a good potter; and he reminded Brennan that the Scripture told of a potter at the wheel.

Anna looked at the jar before her, and wondered whether it would have been produced if the boy had been taken to Sadler’s Wells instead of the British Museum.

“You had better be a journeyman potter, boy,” said Le Brocq. “You may make money by informing against your master, if you watch him closely enough.”

Brennan coloured indignantly, and only said he should like to cut things in marble, because the excise had nothing to do with that, he believed. When the marble was once paid for, duty and all, there was no more meddling from anybody.

“You had better go with us to Jersey, then, if you don’t like the excise; and there you will be free of the customs too. There you may get what you want, without paying even duty. You had better go with us to Jersey.”

Neither Anna nor her mother attempted to conceal her delight at the mention of going back to Jersey; whereupon Le Brocq put on a grave countenance of deliberative wisdom, and, premising that he had no wish to exclude so discreet a boy as Brennan from hearing what he had to say, went on to declare that his conscience had long been uneasy about uncle Anthony’s son Anthony. He could not approve of parental displeasure going so far as to deprive an only son of his father’s flourishing business, and leaving it to comparative strangers.

“O, father, that is the best word you have said since uncle Anthony died!” exclaimed Anna, with clasped hands. “That is,” she continued, recollecting that she had uttered a speech of extraordinary freedom, “I have wished, this long while, that you might be thinking sometimes of how we came into this business, and whether it did not rightfully belong to another.”

“One could not see in a day what kind of a legacy it would prove,” observed Le Brocq; “and I have no doubt that, though it is not exactly the thing to suit us, it will be as fine a business to those who have been brought up in a taxed country as uncle Anthony said it was. Uncle Anthony did very wrong in leaving away his property from his only son. The wonder would have been if, being so bequeathed, the business

had prospered. The proper thing to do next is to find out where the young man is, and to write directly to him to come and take possession.”

“And if he will not come?” said Mrs. Le Brocq, dreading delay.

“If he will not come, he must dispose of the business in his own way. That is his affair, not mine.”

“Then you do not mean to wait till you can hear from America? I am very glad,” observed Anna. “It would take some months to settle all about the giving up the property, as the owner is so far off. I am very glad you do not mean to wait.”

“I cannot think of waiting for him; or any longer than to settle two or three little affairs. Brennan, what has been done about those bottles that are to go abroad? that large order for bottles, you know.”

“They are almost ready, sir. We have been doing our best for them with the few hands we have: and they may be got off this week, if you so please, sir.”

“Very well. I shall just finish that and one or two others of the larger orders before I date my letter, and make an auction of the furniture; and then write my letter and be off.”

“Of this furniture?” said Anna, looking round her.

“To be sure. Then this boy’s mother, or somebody, will either come in, or agree to look after the place till the young man arrives or writes.”

“But,” said Anna, timidly, “if the business is rightfully his, are not the orders and the furniture his too? I thought we should have to pay him, if he requires it, for using his right so long.”

Le Brocq muttered that he ought rather to be paid for all that he had gone through with the pottery business, though he could not fix the payment which would compensate to him for what he had suffered. But he had no doubt, as he said before, that the young man would make a fine thing of it; and the young man should have it.

“Then we shall go very soon indeed, shall we?” said Anna. “Brennan does not like to hear us say so.”

The boy did indeed look grieved. He was too modest to interrupt their deliberations with the question what was to become of him; but it was struggling in his heart. Perceiving him just about to give way, Anna asked him to see whether it was a dog that was making a little noise against the door. Before he could get to the door, there was a shout which informed them that it was not a dog but a child. Jack Durell was not tall enough to reach the knocker, and he had tried pushing and tapping in vain; so now he shouted,

“Father says you are to come directly, and hear the damned bad treatment the people have given him.”

“Hush, my dear! hush!” cried Anna. “That is not the way you should ask us to go.”

“That was what father bade me tell you,—that you are to come directly, and hear —”

“Well, well: we will come. Did your father mean all of us, or which of us?”

“You are all to come directly. Father says every body shall know.”

“’Tis his turn with these fellows now, I suppose,” Le Brocq observed, looking rather pleased than otherwise. “Come, wife.”

Mrs. Le Brocq was still sipping her tea. As she cast her eye over the table, and saw how tempting the remnants of the cakes looked, she felt a distaste to moving away. She sent a long apologetic message to the Durells about being very tired after the agitations consequent on her husband’s release, and was left behind, much to her own satisfaction.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter V.

THE DARKENING HOUR.

How strange it is that the inanimate objects with which people surround themselves appear, even to strangers, to put on a different aspect according to the mood of those whom they surround. It is quite as much the case with the scenery of a house as with that which is not filled and arranged by the hand of man. The natural landscape varies in its aspects from other causes than the vicissitudes of clouds and sunshine. There may be a human being sitting in the midst, through sympathy with whose moods the observer may find the noon sunshine oppressive, or may feel his spirit dance with the brook, or carol with the birds under the murkiest sky. An infant's glee at the lightning may almost make the thunderstorm a sport; and the full moon may shed no light into the soul of one who is watching with the mourner. So it is with the artificial scenery of our houses. There are ague-fits of the spirit when the crackling fire imparts no glow of mirth: and the coldest and dingiest of apartments may, when illuminated with happy faces, put on something of the light and warmth of a palace. Durell's dwelling had always appeared to Anna a very cheerful one,—with the employments of an active mistress and a willing maid; Mary's work-bag on the table, or its contents scattered under a chair, as it might be: Jack's toys heaped up in one corner; drawings by the hands of many fair friends hung round the room; and Durell's flute lying with his music books and a few of the poets on the book shelves. Thus were they arranged this evening; and there was a small clear fire, and a sufficiency of light; and yet the aspect of the apartment struck as deep a sense of gloom on Anna's heart as the scene of her father's imprisonment had ever done. The children were not there; Mary keeping by Betty's side in the kitchen, officiously helping, in order to escape being called to her work in the parlour; and Jack slinking away as soon as his errand was discharged, to look for Stephen, he said. There were only Mrs. Durell, hovering about her husband, with a countenance in which there was as much terror as grief; and Durell himself, in his easy chair, looking so wasted, and even decrepit, as to make the Le Brocqs doubt, for a moment, whether he was the man they came to see. Anna did not attempt to conceal that she was shocked, and asked Mrs. Durell why she had not sent to their house for aid.

Her husband's illness had come on so rapidly, she said, that she had scarcely known what to do: and he had been so unwilling to see any person whatever! Besides, it was only within a few hours that he had sunk to what they saw him now. Every ten minutes lowered him; and, notwithstanding what the doctor said, she did not know how to disbelieve her husband when he declared himself that he was dying.

“His eye is not the eye of a dying man,” said Anna,—the only consolation she could give. “Unless it has lighted up with our coming in—”

“It is not so,” replied her friend. “His eyes have been as bright as diamonds all to-day; and, I think, quite unnatural. O, my dear, if you could help me to find out what should be done for him—His heart is quite broken—”

She could not go on.

“I was afraid, by the message he sent—”

“O, my dear, that was nothing to what I have seen him go through. If you had been here when he threw himself on the floor because they told him he would never be allowed to serve the king or his country in any way again; if you had heard his prayer for those he must not serve, you would not wonder at his being as you see him now.”

“I am sorry to find you looking poorly, sir,” said Le Brocq, feeling that he was making a stretch of complaisance, but having in his mind something about not trampling on a fallen enemy. “I suppose these excise devils have been plaguing you as—as—”

“As I used to plague others, you were going to say, sir. Yes: I have had a few messages from the Board—a few gentle messages. They sent me word—”

He seemed scarcely able to speak, and Anna interrupted him with

“Perhaps, as you are so hoarse, Mr. Durell, you had better leave telling us that till another time.”

“No!” cried he, forcing his voice. “I can tell you, and I will, what their messages were. The first was that my business was to act and not to think; and that, whatever may happen, my part is to be silent and obedient. There’s a pretty message to a free-born man! That came out of what I said at the election where I could not vote; and of my defending it afterwards at your house.”

“O, dear! that is a great pity.”

“Not at all a pity, sir, I don’t repent a syllable I said there. I am only sorry (as sorry as they are), that they did not hear of that election affair before three months were over.—Why?—Because then they could have done worse with me than sending me a reprimand. They could have thrown me into prison for a fine of 500*l.*, and declared—But they kept that for their next message. They could then have made a martyr of me, sir; such a system must have martyrs: and I had rather have died in jail, so that a few people would have asked why, than just be carried from my own door to my grave without having my revenge on those devils in power,—without any body supposing any thing but that I died, as other people die, in their beds.”

“But you will not die yet. You are almost a young man. You must not think of dying yet.”

“Only with a hope to live,” interposed Anna, to whom it was painful to hear people told that they must not think of dying.

“Hope to live!” exclaimed Durell, contemptuously. “What should I hope for? The only prospect that could ever have tempted me to make myself one of their vile crew, they have blighted and blasted. They took care I should know, after that election business, that I should never rise any higher,—that the best I had to expect was to be graciously allowed,—in return for promising not to think, but to be silent and obedient,—to go on being a king’s spy and a trader’s tormentor for life,—to keep my wife and children alive with scanty bread soaked in the tears of my degraded and broken manhood. This is what they offered in return for my promising not to think, but to be silent and obedient.”

“They little knew whom they were speaking to, indeed,” observed Anna.

“Did not they know they were speaking to a man? There are some men that would sooner watch an ant-hill than a hidden distillery, and that think of a lark’s nest when they wake in the morning, and are apt to be looking out after the stars when they should be asleep: and there are others that are never so happy as when they are smelling out soap, and sending a panic before them. The rulers have nothing to do with these men’s different tastes, as long as the poet and the meddler both do their work. But both these, and all between them, are men: and it is a foul crime to strip them of their sight and their strength,—of their reason and their will: and if it be true that the service they are on requires such outrage, it only follows that the service itself is foul. If it would but please God to restore me my strength for a little while, I would find a way yet to pull down their despotism upon their own heads.”

He made an effort to rise, but the ground seemed unsteady beneath his feet, and he sank down again.

“They have struck me a deeper blow still,” said he, “or you would not see me as I am now. They have believed in my dishonour, on the information of a scoundrel. They believe that you have bribed me.”

“That was the reason why my husband could not think of seeing you before: the only reason,” Mrs. Durell was in haste to explain. “But it is over now. They have turned him off, on what Mr. Studley said; and now they want him to be thankful that he is not fined 500*l*. Thank God we have done with them, I say. We shall be able—”

“We have not done with them. We shall not be able,” cried Durell. “The hounds can hunt me out of my rest wherever I may choose to seek it. They boast that they can. They give me notice that if ever I make an attempt to serve my country, they shall bring out their evidence to prove me incapable of ever holding any office or place of trust under the king.”

“But if they cannot do it, Mr. Durell?” suggested Anna.

“They can. Ay: you look surprised: but they can. I never forgot my honour. I never took a bribe; for you know that your Jersey pie and ale were no bribe. But they can prove against me some things which they can no more pardon than I can pardon certain of their practices. If a base wretch joins a better man in evading the law, and

then turns traitor, he is excused and rewarded: but if a man with a heart in his bosom gives a friendly warning to the careless, or passes over the first offence of the widow that toils for her little ones, he is under ban, and can never again serve his king. Such things they may prove against me.”

“I doubt whether you may not still serve the king better than you have done yet,” observed Anna. “I cannot call it doing the king any service to make the people hate their duty to him, and to teach them to defraud him. People should love their king very strongly, for instance, to wish to yield him their cheerful duty through all that my father has undergone in paying his taxes. If you do not collect the king’s money any more, there are other ways of doing him service, which must be open to such a man as you are. Whatever makes his kingdom a more honourable and a happier place; whatever makes his subjects a better or more contented people, is, in my mind, a true and faithful service of the king.”

“That is what I have been saying,” observed Mrs. Durell.

“And what was my answer?” said her husband: “that not all that the wisest and the most true-hearted of the people can do to promote science, and public and private morality, can make any stand against what these—”

“Pray do not call them names,” entreated Anna. “They are men,—men said to be of honour and principle, whose lot it is to administer a bad system which they did not make. Do not let us blame them till we see that they take no pains to alter that which they cannot approve.”

“Well: call them men or devils, or what you will. They administer a system which is enough of itself to keep us back in knowledge and art till all the world besides has passed us, and to do worse for our morals than all our clergy can cure. I can prove it. As for knowledge, only look at the paper tax, keeping books and newspapers out of the reach of those who want them most, and stinting the class above them of their fair share of that which God has given every man as free a right to as to the air of heaven. As for art,—when was there a nobler triumph of it than when man fixed a yellow star out above the sea, to gleam on the souls of thousands of tempest-tost wretches, like the gospel they trusted in, and to give the wanderer his first welcome home?”

“Indeed we can say that,” said Anna. “Such a light through the fog was the best sight we saw in all the sea, in coming; and I never shut my eyes to sleep now but I could fancy I see that light, hoping to pass under it before long.”

“Well: there might now be a light far better than that, or any light that yet hangs above the sea; a light that would shine through the thickest fog, like a morsel of the copper sun that rises on an October morning,—a light that would save thousands of poor wretches that must now go down into the deeps with the moans of their orphaned little ones in their ears: and this light we may not use.”

“Because of the excise?”

“For no other reason. Glasses of a new construction would be required for the light-houses: and this new construction is not such as is set down in the excise laws. No glass-maker dares venture it, and the only hope is that we may get some foreign nation to do it for us.”

Anna thought it was a poor way of serving the king to drown his subjects, and employ foreigners to work upon discoveries made at home,—and all under pretence of taking care of the money of the state.

“This is only one instance out of many,” Durell declared. “As for what I said about morality, I know of cheats enough to fill a jest book.”

“A jest-book!” said his wife, in a tone of remonstrance.

“Nay, my dear, it is their fault, not mine, if, when they have sharpened wits to cheat, the witty cheats are laughed at as good jokes. Last year, a very good joke was spoiled. The wits who made it laughed in their sleeves as long as it went on; and when it came out, every body else laughed, the excise and all, though the crime is really as great as robbing the widow of her mite, since the widow’s mite must go to make up for the fraud. There is no duty on soap in Ireland; and some cunning Englishmen, who had made soap without paying the duty, packed it up for Ireland, got the drawback of 28*l.* a ton, just as if they had paid the duty, and sent it off, smuggled it back again, packed it afresh, got the drawback again, and sent it off, and again smuggled it back; and so on, four times over. Now, for the idea of this cheat, for the lies that were told, for the false oaths that were taken in carrying it on, and for the making a sordid crime into a joke, the excise is answerable. And this is what the excise does for morality.”

“And this is the way the money of the people is managed,” observed Le Brocq; “wrenched from the honest working man with one hand, that it may be given away to the fraudulent great trader with the other!”

Mrs. Durell had been well pleased at the turn the conversation had taken, seeing that, while her husband’s attention was occupied with matters of detail, he resumed more and more of his usual countenance, voice and manner. There was less fierceness in his eye, less effort in his speech, and he sat almost upright. But Le Brocq spoiled all.

“I cannot but wonder at you, Durell, especially as you are a Jerseyman, that you, knowing the system so well, should have left it to the gentlemen to turn you out.”

“Wonder at me!” said Durell, after a pause, during which he could not speak.

“Wonder at me! Why don’t you curse me and loathe me for being an abject wretch, for the sake of my children’s bread? I thank God for taking their bread from them before my eyes, if it teaches them to despise their father and their father’s business.”

“O, husband!” cried Mrs. Durell.

“I mean what I say,” he continued, with a forced calmness of voice and manner. “I am going to leave them—to leave them in your charge; and I command you to bring them up in horror of everything that is dishonest, and vile, and cruel; and if you bring them

up to abhor everything that is dishonest, and vile, and cruel, you must bring them up either to forget their father and his employments, or to despise him for being so employed. I give you your choice, and only pray God that I may hide myself in my grave before either comes to pass.”

“Don’t listen to him. Don’t believe him,” cried the wife, turning first to Le Brocq, and then to Anna. “You see he is not himself; you see he is talking like—”

“Like a man who is waking from a morning dream,” said her husband, whose excited senses caught looks and words which were not intended for him. “I am not drunk, Le Brocq, though I have no right to complain if you fancy me so; and I am not mad.”

“But angry,—very angry,” Anna ventured to interpose.

“Well; if I have been angry, it has nothing to do with what I am going to say, which is about you and yours, Le Brocq, with whom I have no cause to be angry. I am like a man waking from a dream; and I see many things that I wish it had pleased God that I should see long ago.”

“You cannot say you have no cause to be angry with us,” cried Le Brocq, moved by a sudden impulse of sensibility; “that is, with me. Anna has always been your friend; and if my wife has not, it is only because she has copied me. I have doubted you all along till now; and I am very sorry for it.”

“Doubted my honour?” asked Durell, bitterly.

“Doubted your being the friend you professed yourself. I thought that you might, with the power of your office, have prevented some of the misfortunes that have befallen us. But now I find—”

“Now you find that I have been a slave, obliged to stand by, and see those punished that I would fain have saved. Now you find that an exciseman must choose his friends by their trades, if there be any trades that the curse of his employment does not light upon. We used to think that God has shown how friendships should arise,—shown it by the meeting of the eyes that glance sympathy; and the grasp of the hands when men find that they had the same birth-place. But the power that has stepped in between us has set aside God’s arrangements altogether. You and I gathered nuts, as children, in the same deep lanes, and played about the same poquelaye; but as soon as I would have grasped hands upon this, what happened? You believed it the grasp of a traitor, and our enemies said we were giving and taking a bribe; and between you both, I am sunk to perdition, body and soul.”

“But that is all over now. Nobody will think any more—”

“It will never be over. The stain will be as lasting as the record of my name in the creation. When people shall see me carried to my grave, a few days hence, they will remember how they saw me last carried through the streets,—a brute, lower than the lowest of all other brutes. When they meet my wife in her weeds, they will look into

her face to see if there is not joy hidden under it, because her torment of a husband is gone.”

“Do stop him. I cannot bear it,” said Mrs. Durell, putting her hands before her face.

“You will bear it very well, my dear. It is true, you will have no bread to give your children; and when you beg it, people will stop to consider whether they ought to help the children of the dissolute exciseman; but all this will not set against the relief of having got rid of the wretch himself. Ah! you don’t think so now, because you pity me, as you would pity a sickly child;—you pity me for sitting drooping here, with a perishing carcase and a worn-out spirit. But I don’t want your pity. I won’t be treated like a child—I say—”

He rose from his chair, and took a few strides towards his wife, evidently in a state of delirium. The urgency of the occasion seemed to inspire Le Brocq with the very sentiment which suited the moment.

“I say, Mr. Durell,” said he, “no man likes being made a child of; and I like it no better than other men; so I am going back,—come, you had better sit down again; take my arm;—I am going back to Jersey. Have you any messages for your old friends there?”

“To Jersey: ay; you are right there, Le Brocq. That was what I was going to say. Don’t stay here, where there is more misery caused by mere paying taxes than there is in Jersey by all God’s dark providences together. Go and tell them, whatever they do,” he continued, settling himself in his chair again,—“tell them, whatever they do, not to dare, for the sake of raising money for the state, to crush the simple and high-minded, and exalt the mean and crafty—”

“Ay; Studley! How that fellow is flourishing at the expense of us all!” cried Le Brocq.

Anna marked the flashing of Durell’s eyes at the name, and interposed.

“We shall soon be settled in our farm again, Mr. Durell; and perhaps you will be well enough to come and see us by the time we begin shaking the trees in the orchard.”

“Shaking the trees in the orchard,” repeated Durell slowly, as if the words revived some intensely pleasurable recollections.

“Your old friends were very sorry when you went away, and they will be heartily glad to hear you are coming back. You will come and see us, Mr. Durell.”

“Come, my dear! ay; that I will,—in body or in spirit. I will be at your apple-cropping. I will pelt you with apples; and if you cannot see where they come from, remember who promised you this. I will echo you when you go to call home your cows. I will rustle in the ivy when you pass the Holy Oak;—(that old oak is the first place I shall go to.) I will walk round and round you as you sit on the poquelaye; and if you feel a sudden breath of air upon your face, remember who it was that said he

would haunt you. God will hear my prayer, and let me see Jersey again, whether I die first or not.—Jack! Come here, Jack!”

His feeble voice could not make itself heard further than half across the room; but Jack came in from the kitchen, in answer to Le Brocq’s effectual call. His father desired him to bring down the flute from the book-shelves; and his manner of obeying,—as if he was by no means sure whether he had to do with his father or with a ghost,—did not help to recover Anna from the chilly fit into which she had been thrown by Durell’s promises. She did not think she could ever go out to call home the cows, or pass the Holy Oak or the poquelaye. She had never feared Durell till this night; but he was strangely altered; and she thought that the impression of this night would be stronger than that of all her previous acquaintance with him.

“Stand here, boy; don’t go away,” said Durell to Jack, who was most unwillingly pinned between his father’s knees to hear the flute. Durell began an air which is sung by the common people in Jersey every day of the year; but his breath failed him directly; and he allowed the instrument to be taken from him.

“Then I may go,” said Jack, gently struggling to escape.

“Yes, my dear,” said his mother. “Your father is tired now; he has done enough for this evening.”

“No, no,” said Durell. “I must tell him what he is to see at home. I must tell him what little boys do in Jersey. When I was your age, Jack—”

“To-morrow, love,” said his wife. “You can tell him to morrow.”

“I should like to hear what boys do in Jersey,” declared Jack, his confidence returning.

“And so you shall, my boy. Sit still, Le Brocq. I shall want you to help me. When I was your age, Jack—”

And then he proceeded to tell how in his childhood he went out through thickets of the blue hydrangea to the dells where he spent the whole day in birds’ nesting; and of the hatfull of wild flowers that he treated himself with before he began to climb the trees whose ivy was his ladder. Not two minutes after he had soothed himself into a state of calmness by these recollections, he began to speak indistinctly, and to appear drowsy. Jack was admonished by gesture not to ask for any thing over again; not to be impatient for what was to come next. This was a hard admonition; and when his father sank back asleep, and he was gently withdrawn from between the knees which no longer held him, the poor boy was quietly weeping at having to wait for the rest of the story. Not even his mother suspected how long he would have to wait.

The Le Brocqs stole away. Jack was put quietly out of the room. Mrs. Durell hung a shade upon the lamp, fed the fire with the least possible noise, and sat down with her work opposite her husband, trusting that he was dreaming of the meads and coves of his native island, and that he would thus sleep on till morning. Long before morning,

she had discovered that he would wake no more. The Le Brocqs were called up early by Stephen to be told that they had heard the very last words of him who had died of a broken heart.

It was a great blessing that his last words were words of peace. There was no need for Anna to implore little Jack to treasure up what his father was saying when he fell asleep. When Jack was grown up into a man, it was still a matter of mourning to him that he had not heard the whole of what his father had to tell about birds' nesting in the dells of Jersey.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VI.

THE LAND OF SIGNALS.

The Le Brocqs were more anxious than ever to leave London when they had seen their friendly countryman laid in the ground. In order to repay himself as far as he could for the troubles he had incurred in business, Le Brocq determined to carry with him to Jersey as much as he could convey of his manufactured article. The cider-makers of the islands would be very glad of his bottles, he knew, if he could sell them cheap enough; and he believed he could sell them cheap, and yet secure a profit by obtaining the drawback on exportation allowed by law. After all the experience he had had of the duty-paying in England, it still did not occur to him that there might be difficulty in recovering the duty which the law professed to restore. Nothing can be more evident than that when a tax is imposed on the consumption of any article, and is advanced by the maker of the article, the maker should be repaid what he has advanced when the article goes to be consumed by the people of another empire, or by those in some other part of the same empire who may be particularly exempted from the payment of the duty. Le Brocq imagined that all he should have to do would be to show how much duty he had paid upon the ware he wished to export, and to receive the sum back again. He even speculated on whether the government would allow him interest on the money he had advanced. He considered it his due; but he would not delay his departure on account of any disagreement of this kind. He would not put off till another day the conclusion of a business which he supposed might be transacted in ten minutes. He little thought that the keenest and most practised exporter would laugh as much at the idea of finishing the affair in a few minutes as at that of receiving interest for the duty advanced. It might be that because he was discovered to be a novice, he was more strictly dealt with than those who are acquainted with the regulations of the excise and customs; but he found himself much mistaken in his calculations. It is not for the benefit of the king's interests, or for the credit of his service, that practised persons are comparatively little watched, while novices are well nigh persecuted under the perplexing system of the excise and customs. It is unjust and injurious, but perfectly natural;—natural, because no human patience, industry, and vigilance can be expected to be always equal to the disgusting labour of spying and detecting. It is natural that those who have been made fully aware of the dangers they incur by fraud should be left under the influence of fear to swear truly and pay duly, though unexamined. Honour is a word out of use upon these occasions; or is employed merely as a word. Fear is the influence to which his majesty's officers trust, when they leave a practised trader to declare his own claims and responsibilities, and show how he wishes his business to be managed. Fear is the influence they invoke when they impress the inexperienced with awe, or worry him out of his temper, with a view to saving themselves future trouble. Fear is the influence above all unfavourable to the interests of a king, and the security of a government; and that which should be used, not for the levying of its support, but only for the deterring of its subjects from crime, against which all other precautions had previously been taken.

The officers succeeded in inspiring the Jerseyman with fear, insomuch that he presently doubted whether he could at last get away without leaving his bottles behind. While others, happier than he, paid down small sums with one hand, and received larger with the other, after gabbling over oaths which none but the initiated could understand, and witnessing certain entries made on their own declaration, Le Brocq had a much longer ceremony to go through. He had to swear that the bottles he wished to export were none of them under the weight of three ounces; that he had given due notice to the officer of excise of his intention to ship his wares; that the contents of the package corresponded with the document signed by the excise officer; that they were all marked with an E X; that none were broken; that none had been used; that no prohibited article was in the package; that the wares were packed according to law, without vacant spaces or other improprieties; that they were believed to be entirely of English manufacture, and that they had paid duty; and so on. He was next told, as a friendly warning, that if the package was not properly prepared for sealing, (*i. e.* with a hollow scooped out for the purpose,) the goods would be forfeited: if any brand or mark was erased, the goods would be forfeited, and the offender would be fined 200*l.*: if the package was not on board within twelve hours from the time of branding or sealing, it would be forfeited; and so on. Moreover, the searcher had power to open and examine the package; and if it was found that the exporter was not correct in every tittle of what he had sworn, he would be indicted for perjury. Le Brocq had as much horror of a false oath as any man; but he now felt how easily a timid or a hasty man might be tempted into one, for the sake of escaping as soon and as easily as possible from the inquisition of the excise. He felt the strength of the temptation to a trader to swear to the legal preparation of a box, the packing of which he had not superintended.

In the next place, he found that, so far from obtaining interest upon the duty he had advanced, he must be at some expense to recover the drawback. The debenture, or certificate of the customs' officer that he would be entitled to the drawback, is on a ten-shilling stamp; and he who would recover the amount of one tax could do it only by paying another. To recover an excise tax, he must pay a stamp tax. The dismay of the Jerseyman, thus haunted by taxes to the last, was highly amusing to a fellow-sufferer who stood by, and who proclaimed his own worse fate. He was receiving back the duty upon four packages of goods, and each debenture cost him 11*s.* 6*d.*; making 2*l.* 7*s.* the cost of recovering 10*l.* But this was not the last discovery that Le Brocq had to make.

It appeared finally that, as the goods were intended for the Channel islands, the drawback could not be allowed till a certificate of the landing of the goods could be produced, signed by the collector and comptroller of the customs on the island where the ware was landed. Le Brocq was not the less disconcerted by this news for its being made evident to him that such an arrangement is necessary under a system of taxation by excise and customs. It was clear, as he acknowledged, that without such a precaution, the drawback might be obtained upon goods which were not really destined for the Channel islands: but the arrangement did not the less interfere with his private convenience.

What was to be done now? He had no inclination to leave the goods, or to forego the drawback; and there was no one here to whom he could commit his affairs. After a long consultation at home, it was agreed that Le Brocq should, after all, stay till cousin Anthony, or instructions from him, should arrive; and that Mrs. Le Brocq and Anna should proceed to the islands, conducting and conducted by Stephen. Stephen was not exactly the kind of escort that the family would have thought of accepting, some time before: but circumstances were now changed. He could guide them to Aaron: he could secure for them, by ways and means of his own, a remarkably cheap passage. He was now adrift, there being no longer a home for him at Mrs. Durell's; and he promised, for his own sake as well as that of his companions, to make the most, instead of the least, of such sight as he had left. As he could not expect to meet with another Durell to house and cherish him, it was his interest to find his way back to his old comrades, and see what they could do for him. While offering his parting thanks and blessing to Mrs. Durell, he intimated to her that, though he could not see to write, she should hear from him in a way which he hoped would be acceptable;—an intimation which she received with about the same degree of belief that she had been accustomed to give to the protestations of others of her husband's protégés.

Mild were the airs, and cloudless was the sky when the vessel which conveyed the Le Brocqs and their escort drew near the Swinge of Alderney, and when the Channel islands rose to view, one after another, from the sunny sea. The stupendous wall of rock which seems to forbid the stranger to dream of exploring Alderney, rose on the left; the little russet island of Berhou on the right; and, beyond it, the white towers of the three Casket lighthouses, each on its rock, and all gleaming in the sunset, rose upon Anna's heart as well as upon her eye. To her surprise, she met with sympathy.

"'Tis not often," said Stephen, "that I care about storm or calm. Wind and weather may take their own course for me. But I had a choice for this evening. I wished for a wind that would bring us here before sunset, and for a sky that would let the sun shine."

"You see those white towers," said Anna, who perceived that he twinkled and strained his eyes in that direction.

"See them! yes, indeed," said Mrs. Le Brocq. "Those must be stone blind that do not get dazzled with all that glare. I like Jersey, with the green ivy hanging from the rock over the sea. I want to be at Jersey, with my Louise."

"All in good time, ma'am," said Stephen. "We must land somewhere else first, and find your Aaron. How like ghosts they stand!" he continued, still looking towards the Caskets. "And one taller than the rest."

"You see that too," said Anna. "Then I am sure you must see Berhou. We are coming nearer every moment. Hark to the splashing in the Swinge!"

"Ay, ay; I'll listen with the best," said Stephen. "And I can see something in the Swinge, though the dark island is all one with the sea to me."

“Which dark island? And what do you see in the Swinge?”

“Berhou has nothing to mark it to my eye. I can just trace out Alderney against the sky; but the something white that is leaping and gleaming there, I take to be the foam of the waters in the Swinge. Ah! here we go!”

While the vessel pitched and rolled, and took her zigzag course, as if spontaneously, between the black points of rock which showed themselves above the white billows, and seemed to tell of a hundred dangers as formidable as themselves, Anna was sorry for him who, either physically or intellectually blind, could see nothing in Berhou. Neither man nor child was visible; no human habitation; no boat upon the strip of beach which the rocks and the sea spared between them; but the grey gull sat, spreading its wings for flight, and the stormy petrel, rarely met within sight of land, were here perceived to lose the mystery of their existence. While Anna observed them going forth and returning, and hovering over the fissures of the rock in which they make their homes, she found that Mother Carey’s chickens are probably hatched from the egg, like other birds, and not wafted from the moon, or floated from the sea depths,—the especial favourites of some unseen power. The slopes of down which showed themselves in the partings of the rocks, looked green in contrast with whatever surrounded them; though no hand of man brightened their verdure, and they were not even trodden by any foot but those of the wild animals who had the region to themselves. While she was thus gazing, and her mother would look at nothing because it was not Jersey, the master and one or two of his crew seemed to be watching the coast of the other island in the intervals of their extreme care to obviate the perils of the passage through the strait. At this moment, a breath of air brought the faint sound of chiming bells from Alderney. Stephen instantly turned to listen, and waited patiently till it came again, and Anna was sure that it was wafted from a churchsteeple, and not from any region of fancy.

“Master,” said Stephen, “you will not be able to land us in Alderney to-night, I am afraid.”

The master was just going to advise the party to proceed to Guernsey. The state of the tide was such that he could not engage to set any one on shore in Alderney. The party had better go on to Guernsey.

“The vraicking season begins to-morrow, master. You have no mind to lose all your passengers that might like to stay and see the vraicking. Well; that is fair enough. But we cannot go on to Guernsey, having no call there. You may set us ashore on Berhou.”

The master supposed he meant some other place. The honey-bees and the rabbits might make out a good night’s rest in Berhou, but there were no lodgings for Christians. Stephen knew better; and knew, moreover, that the master might feel well enough pleased at being spared performing his promise as to Alderney, to land the party, without objection, in a more practicable place. This was true. The master had not the least objection to their supping with the rabbits, and sleeping among the sea-fowl, if they chose. Moreover, if they found themselves starving by the time he came

back that way, he would toss them some biscuit, if they would only hoist a flag of distress. Stephen did not care a whit for the master's mockery of his plans, or for Mrs. Le Brocq's complaints at being landed any where so far from her Louise. He showed so much respect to Anna's doubtful looks and words as to assure her that he knew what he was about, and that no delay would arise from his choice of an uninhabited island for a temporary resting place. Anna had no choice but to trust him; but a feeling of forlornness came over her when, having landed the old lady, and seated her on the sands to recover her breath and dry her tears, she and Stephen stood to see the vessel recede in the strait, and at length enter the open sea beyond, leaving them out of reach of human voice and help.

"Could that bell be heard here from Alderney if the sea was quiet?" she asked.

"I dare say it might; but this sea is never quiet," he replied. "Day and night, summer and winter, it plunges and boils as you see. You are thinking that the sound of a church-bell would be cheering in this solitude; but yonder bell keeps its music for the folks on its own island; and a merry set they will be to-night on the south side, watching the tide going down towards morning, that they may begin the vraicking."

"And what are we to do next?" asked Anna, with a touch of the doleful in her voice which seemed to amuse Stephen.

"Catch Mother Carey's chickens, and run after rabbits, to be sure. You know there is nothing else to live upon here. We shall have a merry life of it, shall not we?"

"I wish you would answer me, Stephen. My mother cannot bear joking. What are we to do next?"

"You must watch for the lighting of the Caskets, and eat a biscuit in the meantime."

It was a comfort that some biscuits were secured; for Mrs. Le Brocq was never wholly miserable while eating, whatever she might be before and after. The sun was fast sinking behind the Caskets, so that it could not be long before their now dark towers would be crowned with a yellow gleam, and more of Stephen's little plot would be unravelled. Anna suggested that if they had to go any where to look for a boat or a lodging, it would be better to move before twilight came on. She concluded they were not to sit here on a stone all night, looking at Alderney. Stephen begged pardon. He knew every step of the way so well that he had forgotten how much more important daylight was to his companions than to him. He rose from the vetch-strewn sand where he had laid himself at ease, loaded himself with what he could conveniently carry of the family luggage, saying that the rest might remain where it was, as there was no chance of rain before morning, and set forward over the heathery waste.

This was the first ground the party had trodden since they left London; and even Mrs. Le Brocq observed the difference between Lambeth pavement and the turf on which they were now walking, matted with fragrant heath, with patches between of blossoming thyme. Little white-tailed rabbits trotted in all directions to their burrows; and swarms of the celebrated honey-bee (called the leaf-cutter, from its hanging its

cell in the sands with rose-leaf curtains) hovered and hummed over the thyme-beds and the briar-rose bush which was now closing its blossoms from the honey-searcher. The dash and roar of the strait were left behind, and the deepest silence succeeded. None of the party spoke while they proceeded with noiseless steps, Stephen leading the way, with his staff for his protection. He would go first and alone, lest he should lose his way by relaxing his attention. At last, his step slackened, and he felt the ground about him.

“Is there a bit of grey rock hereabouts, like a sofa?”

“There is a stone seat that you might fancy like a sofa, twelve yards from your right hand.”

“Give me your arm round to the other side of it. There! now there is a path downwards, almost from your feet, is not there?”

“Yes; a very steep path,—difficult to get down, I should think. The honeysuckles are like a hedge on either side. You smell the honeysuckles?”

“It was the honeysuckles that guided me, after we had half crossed the heath. You were too busy with the thyme to attend to them, I dare say; but the honeysuckles were what I was on the look-out for. If we have to go to Serk, you will find the air as sweet as Paradise with them.”

“Why should we go to Serk?”

“I may be able to tell you within an hour or two, or we may have to wait till morning. In the last case, I know of a snug cave where we will light a fire with a little of yonder furze; and it will be odd if we do not fall in with something good to eat and drink, and something soft to sleep upon.”

“I sleep in a cave!” exclaimed Mrs. Le Brocq. “I cannot do any such thing. I never slept in a cave in my life.”

“If you see any place that you like better, I am sure I am very glad,” replied Stephen. “Yonder sofa would not be a bad place on a soft summer’s night. Only, a brood of Mother Carey’s chickens might chance to flap their wings about you and startle you; or, if you woke, you might happen to find yourself in the middle of a circle of strangers, all smoking their pipes; and then you might wish yourself down with me in the cave. If you look round, ma’am, you will see no blue roofs in all the island,—unless they have altered it since I knew it.”

Mrs. Le Brocq shuddered as she said that it was too dark to see blue roofs or any thing else.

“And there are the Casket lights,” cried Anna. “Only two! yes; there is the third. Look, mother! like three red stars.”

“Now,” said Stephen, “one of you must be so good as to help me down this path,—just to the turning.”

Anna guided him, her mother calling out all the way, that they must not go far: she did not choose to be left alone.

While they were for a few minutes out of sight, she had recourse to her prayers, finding herself in too strong a panic for tears. Those nasty birds would come and pick out first her eyes and then Anna’s; and then they two would be more blind than Stephen, and could never get away; and their bones would lie stark and stiff on the cold ground. Before she had done praying that she might live to die in her bed, her companions re-appeared, to save her eyes for the present from the birds.

When Stephen and Anna had reached the first turn of the winding path, he desired to know what was to be seen beneath. “Scarcely anything,” replied Anna. “Between the Casket lights and these rocks, there is nothing but the dark grey sea.”

“And nothing under these rocks?”

“Only a little patch of sand, with nothing upon it; and the white birds sailing out and in. Not a boat on the sea, nor a living person on the land! What a place to bring us to, Stephen!”

“Not a living person on the land! Do you suppose there are any dead, Miss Anna? Do you see any white skeletons among the dark rocks?”

“The place gives one as horrible an idea as any you can speak,” Anna replied. “This is a place where a poor wretch may be cast ashore, and drag himself up out of sea-reach, and mark the sun set thrice while he is pining with hunger and cannot die, and beholding land far off where he cannot make himself seen or heard, till all is one dark cloud before his dying eyes, and his last terrors seize him, and there is no one to take his hand, and speak the word that would calm his spirit. O, Stephen, what a place to bring my mother and me to!”

“Ay, is not it? You are making up your mind to die here, I see. Come; this is all I have to show you yet. We may go up to the sofa again, and see whether your mother is dreaming about dead men’s bones, or crying because she cannot get away.”

Anna was not disposed to make any answer. She led the way back in silence, and said no more to her mother than to remind her that remonstrance was in vain. Nothing could well be more cheerless than the companionship of the party for the next half hour, while the stars were piercing the heaven, and the sea-birds dropping into the caverns below, and the night breeze going forth on its course, and whispering the rocks which stood as sentries over the restless tide. Mrs. Le Brocq sat bolt upright on the stone sofa; Stephen lay down on the turf, as if to sleep; and Anna walked backwards and forwards, harassed by uneasy thoughts. At the same instant, she stopped in her pacing, and Stephen half raised his head, as a watch-dog does at any sound brought by the night wind.

“What is it?” asked Anna.

Probably her half-breathed question did not reach Stephen; for he yawned, and laid himself down as before. Anna could only suppose that she had heard nothing. There was no use in asking her mother; for she must doubtless be fully occupied with the noise in her head, of which she complained at all times, and especially when under any sort of agitation.

In ten minutes more, Stephen jumped up, saying briskly,

“Now, Miss Anna, I must trouble you once more.”

“To do what, Mr. Stephen?”

“To prevent my being lost in the honey-suckles, that is all.”

With some unwillingness, Anna again made herself his guide down the path. When she reached the turn, she stifled an exclamation of astonishment.

“Out with it, Miss Anna!” said Stephen. “You see none but friends. What are they doing below?”

“They have set up a boat sideways, to prevent the fire being blown out; or, perhaps, to hinder its being seen from the sea. What a fire they are making! and every man has his pipe.”

“As is fitting for those that help so many to a pipe which they could not otherwise get. How many are there? Do you see any face that you know?”

“I can scarcely tell yet. The light flickers so! One—two—there are five, I think. O, Stephen!—it never can be,—yes, it is,—Mr. Prince, the shopkeeper at St. Peter’s, that—”

“Why should not it be Mr. Prince? The shopkeepers are as likely a set of men to be out on a vrecking eve as any. Is he the only one you know?”

“Yes. I see all their faces now. There is no other that I have ever known, I think. How very odd it is to see Mr. Prince look just as he used to do when he stood smiling behind his own counter!”

“He smiles, does he? Well; I hope you ladies will not be afraid to trust yourselves with Mr. Prince; I have no doubt he will be proud to take care of you back.”

“To St. Peter’s! But we do not want to go to St. Peter’s. Stephen, I believe we shall never make you understand how much we wish to get back to Jersey. I wonder you can trifle with us so.”

“Have patience,” said Stephen. “You well know that there is one thing that you desire even more than to get back to Jersey.”

“About Aaron. There he is! behind the boat!” cried she, passing Stephen, and flying down the steep pathway, as if she had thought it possible for Aaron now to escape her by running into the sea. Aaron had no wish to flee away. Before his sister had made her way through his companions, he had opened his arms to her; and he had no less pleasure in the meeting than herself.

He was all surprise at finding Anna apparently alone on a desert island; and she that he was not expecting her. He knew that his family meant soon to return to their farm; but he would as soon have expected to meet the queen of England in the wilds of Berhou as his sister Anna.

His mother there too!—And his father also? he inquired with an altered voice. His father not being of the party, he became extremely impatient to join his mother.

“That is the way by which I came down,” Anna explained. “There,—by yonder little opening. Let me show you. And poor Stephen: I forgot him;—he is there; and he can neither get up nor down by himself, and I left him alone. O, Aaron, how could you go away as you did?” And all the way up the ascent, Aaron had to justify himself for going away as he did. He scarcely paused a moment to greet Stephen; but ran on to find Mrs. Le Brocq. When the first tears and exclamations were over, the question was heard again,

“Aaron, how could you go away as you did?”

“Why, mother, is not being here much better than drudging on the tread-wheel, or even than doing nothing in a prison? I tell you, mother, if you did but know the pleasant sort of life I have been leading lately—Well; if that won’t do, let me tell you that it makes me so merry to see you and Anna standing here,—so free, and so far out of the reach of such fellows as Studley,—that I could find in my heart to whiff away all laws like the smoke from one of those tobacco-pipes.”

Anna thought that the use of laws was to enable people to stand free, and out of the reach of knaves and revengeful men.

“To be sure, such ought to be the purpose of laws; but is such the purpose and effect of the excise laws? Nobody knows better than I, and the other men below there, that the raising money for the state is necessary for the security and quiet of the people; but if the money is so raised as to spoil their security and quiet, who is not tempted to wish the laws at the devil, and let the state take its chance for money? It is a fine thing for us to be here, at any rate, under this open sky, and with plenty of meat and drink below. Come, mother; we will have a good supper to-night, without asking the king’s will about what we shall have, or paying for his leave to enjoy one thing rather than another. We have plenty of vraicking cakes from Alderney, and some fine French wine to drink with them.”

“O, Mr. Stephen,” cried Mrs. Le Brocq, “we are much obliged to you for bringing us here. Here is Aaron so free and happy! and vraicking cakes, and French wine! We are much obliged to you, Mr. Stephen.”

“Yes, we are indeed,” said Anna, heartily. “I beg your pardon, I am sure, for doubting what you were doing for us. But it did seem very forlorn. How well and merry Aaron looks, to be sure! If we were but certain it was all right!”

“How can it be wrong when we are all as merry as children let out of school?” Stephen asked. “I found out your evil thoughts of me, Miss Anna; but now, perhaps, you will trust me another time. I may chance to hear more in a church-bell than the news that the vraicking begins to-morrow.”

“Was it that bell that told you that Aaron would be here to-night? I never thought of that. I never could have guessed it.”

“I dare say not. Some people that have more interest in such matters than you, are no more aware than you of the sly little markets that are held in many a cove and cavern, when an oyster-fishing or a vraicking gives opportunity for many boats to meet together. Such a bell as that we heard in Alderney is a signal to more ears than it is intended for; and lights like those” (pointing towards the Caskets) “serve many eyes for a dial, to show the hour of meeting. Aaron, are there many foreigners off the islands just now?”

“Above fifty small sail of French off Guernsey this morning. The Guernsey folks are fine customers to the French now; which is no little help to our business. We can get anything to order; and when by chance other things fail, there is always corn and wine for the boldest of us to carry; and I, for one, have never had to wait for a port to get them into.—But come; there will be no supper left if we do not make haste down. We jumped ashore with fine appetites, and I would not trust any body with a cooked supper, after such a pull as we have had to-day. Besides, we have not overmuch time, for we must be off Little Serk before the first farmer is up and overlooking the sea. We have a private errand there.”

“And you are going to leave us—all alone!” exclaimed Mrs. Le Brocq.

“Not if you wish to go with us, mother. At Little Serk you will be all the nearer Jersey, you know. We will take good care of you. Come, Anna; you are not afraid of supping with my partners, are you?”

“O, no; and yet, if anybody had told me—But they do not look at all wild and terrible, as I thought people did when they broke the laws.”

“It depends much on what sort of people break the laws,” observed Stephen; “and that again depends on what sort of laws they are that are broken. When it is not the violent and cruel, but such people as thrifty shop-keepers—”

“I cannot help laughing,” said Anna, “to think of Mr. Prince. I am sure nobody could ever dream of being afraid of him. Mother, will you come down, and speak to Mr. Prince, and have some supper?”

“And he will tell us the best plan for getting to Jersey, I dare say. I wonder whether he has been in the way of hearing anything of Louise lately?”

The old lady made little difficulty about the descent; and she and her daughter were presently so far demoralized as to be supping with a company of smugglers, almost as comfortably as if they had been honest men.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VII.

WELCOME TO SUPPER.

The party was off Little Serk, as Aaron willed, before the first farmer was abroad on the upland to overlook the gleamy sea. Two of the company had hastened over the heath, while the others were at supper, to bring the larger packages which had been left behind; and all had put off beneath the moon some time before midnight. Mr. Prince had found a little leisure for being civil to his former customers, though he had much to do, as well as his companions, in stowing in one of the caverns the goods he had brought from France, and loading the boat with the packages deposited there by some friendly vracickers and lobster-fishers.

It was not that in these islands any danger attended traffic of any kind; except in the one article of spirits which had not paid duty. There were here no guards patrolling the sands, or perched upon the steep, to look for thieves in every bark that cleaved the blue expanse, and anticipate murder when the twilight spread its shadows. There were here no questionable abodes,—spy-stations,—nighed in places convenient for overlooking the traffic of housewives with the fishermen who furnished their tables. Here there were no deadly struggles in the darkness, the comrade going down in deep waters, with the bitter consciousness that he was thrown overboard lest his wounds should lead his companions into danger; or left unclaimed upon the beach, while wife or parents are secretly mourning, and longing to give the exposed body the respectful burial which strangers will not yield. No such extraordinary arrangements deform the simplicity and mar the peace of the society of these islands; but, while the coasts of France and England cannot enjoy the same freedom, the islanders are tempted to share in the frauds and the perils of their neighbours. Not content with having corn, wine, and tobacco at their natural cost of production and carriage, they are willing to help others to the same privilege; and will continue to be so willing as long as, by their office of go-between, they can make a profit by the bad legislation of the two kingdoms within whose embrace they lie. There is no remedy for this but rectifying the faults of French and English commercial legislation. As long as taxes are levied by raising the prices of necessary articles so high as to make smuggling profitable, the island boats will steal along the shores, or cautiously cross the straits on the dishonest errands of a mediator between two defrauders; they will land their passengers short of their point, because they have something besides passengers on board; they will make a show of lobsters to hide tea and tobacco. To impose restraints on them, similar to those by which they now profit in pocket and suffer in morals, would only increase the evil by enlarging the field of temptation, and adding the demand of the islands to that of the two neighbouring coasts. There is no remedy but in putting all on an equality, not of restraint, but of freedom.

The lord of Serk and his people had not yet opened their eyes on the morning sunshine, when the boat containing Aaron and his party ran under the perpendicular rocks of the island, and several voices announced that they had arrived at their

destination. No landing-place was visible; but the women had by this time become inured to wonders, and resigned to whatever of romantic might come in their way. They asked no questions, even when their boat grated against the rock, and moved uneasily in the ripple without being intended to make any progress. They made no objection when desired to lay hold of a rope which dangled from a ledge thirty feet above their heads; and quietly submitted to be hauled up they knew not whither. Up and down, forward and round-about they went, now seeing a cask taken up from a store-cavern, now dropping a message in a lonely cottage; and at last sitting down to repose in a cavern which was lighted only from a natural opening at the top, upon which the blue sky seemed to rest as a roof. Here the echoes were already awake with the blows of the mattock and the grating of the saw. Here boat-building went on, early and late; for a certain Englishman had found out how well the islanders are off for timber,—the best of timber, which pays no duty; and many a good bargain he made by going forth in a worn-out vessel, and coming home in a boat of Serk workmanship. Aaron was right in supposing that here he should pick up the means of conveying his mother and sister home with their heavy wares. Here he insisted on their resting, after their many fatigues and long watching; but it was not that he might himself repose. He had still a little trip to make.

“My dear, you will be tired to death,” said his mother. “I never knew you work all night in Jersey.”

Aaron laughed, and said that people are seldom tired to death when they work at no bidding but their own: and, as for working at night—

“It is a bad practice, Aaron, depend upon it,” said his sister. “Honest work is done by daylight.”

“Carry your objections to those who taught me to work at night,” answered Aaron. “And not me only, but hundreds more. They are but few who would naturally work when their part of the world is supposed to be asleep;—the nurse beside the sick-bed, and the watchmen that walk the streets of cities; the beacon-keeper that trims the lamps in his high tower, and the helmsman that fixes his eyes upon those lights far out at sea. All but these are supposed to be at rest when God has set his stars for night-lamps, and drawn the darkness about us for a curtain: but there are some who contradict his decree that night is the time for rest;—and they are such as make harsh and unjust laws.”

“But for laws,” said Anna, nearly as she had said before, “we might be subject to the robber by night, and the violent man by day. Without laws, none of us could lie down and sleep in peace.”

“Without some wholesome laws: but, if it were not for certain unwise and cruel laws, thousands more of us would lie down and sleep in peace. Ask the country justice in England, whose business it is to enforce the laws, how often it happens that labourers who cannot get work during the day because their superiors have a monopoly of bread, toil unlawfully all the night because their superiors have a monopoly of game. He may dispute the wickedness; but he will not deny what comes of digging pitfalls

for men, lest they should set springes for birds. Ask, — (nobody could have told better than poor Durell)—ask any exciseman what time is chosen by certain traders for their traffic, and makers for their work; and he will tell you of the burning, and the boiling, and the distilling, and the packing and removing that take place by night. He will tell you that the noblest works that men can do, and that they ought to do proudly in the daylight, are done by night, because the law has fixed a sin and a shame upon them. To make improvements in human comfort is turned into a sin and shame, when those improvements are made too expensive by a tax; therefore they are tried by night. The exchange of the fruits of men's labour is made a sin and a shame, when a tax comes in to make such an exchange unprofitable: therefore it is done by night. These innocent things being made a sin and a shame is the reason why tax-gatherers prowl about, like so many robbers, when the sun is down; and why the better men whom they entrap are carried to prison in the morning, to come out blasted and desperate, as if they had committed a crime against God's majesty instead of against the king's treasury."

Mrs. Le Brocq stared in astonishment at her son. With a little hesitation, she asked him whether he had not adopted a new vocation, and turned preacher. The kindness of his manner to her, and the eloquence of his speech, concurred to impress her with the idea. He smiled as he answered, that there would be no lack of preachers or of eloquence upon this subject, if every one who had suffered were allowed to bear witness. A voice would rise up from all the land, and go forth over the sea, if every Briton who is injured by the mode in which he is obliged to pay his contribution to the state, might speak his mind.

But still,—Aaron talked so differently from what he used to do,—so freely,—so cleverly.

"There is all the difference in the world, mother, between— But I do not wish to say anything disrespectful of my father: so I will only mention that the reason why it is found to be prudent for governments to allow people to speak out, is because nothing makes men more eloquent than a sense of wrong; and the stronger the eloquence that is suppressed, the more doggedly will the sense of wrong show itself in some other way. A whole nation can mutter and be sullen, as I used to be; and its muttering and sullenness may prove of more importance than mine. Now I have got an occupation of my own, and am under nobody's management, I could preach (as you would say) very strongly both to parents and governments about not being spies and meddlers,—that is to say," (recollecting his father) "about not interfering more than is pleasant with the doings of their children and subjects. To make wise and merciful general laws, and then leave the will and actions free in particular instances, is the only true policy,—the only kind of government which is not in its nature tyranny."

"But how do you apply that to the paying of taxes?" inquired Stephen. "How is the state to raise money on such a plan of government?"

"Far more easily than in any other way, in my opinion. Under a general rule that property is to pay such or such a proportion of tax, there is the least possible room for partiality and oppression; for the derangement of people's affairs, and interference

with people's actions. There is an open and honest calling to account, at times that are fixed, in a manner that is established, and for purposes that are well understood: while, by meddling as excisemen and customhouse officers meddle, the king is defrauded of the affections of his people; the state is wronged in purse and reputation; and its agents are made masters to teach multitudes a livelihood which need never have been heard of. Which of us would naturally have dreamed of living by defrauding the government, for whose protection we were ready to pay our share?"

"Then you will not go on as you have been doing lately," said Anna. "You will go home with us, and serve the government as you yourself think the government ought to be served."

"I will see you home, and do my father's errand at the custom-house," replied Aaron. "The States shall never have cause to complain of me, as long as they go on to take our taxes as they do now. As for cheating them, I could not if I would: and I am sure I have no desire to do it while they treat me like a man, and ask no more from me than is due from a subject."

"I am sure I hope they will go on to do so."

"You may well wish it. If ever they begin meddling with your cider or soap-making, or setting spies upon me when I buy tobacco or hemp, I shall be off to some country,—Turkey may be,—where taxes are demanded and not filched."

"Turkey! I thought that was a horrible country to live in."

"So you would find it in many respects; but it is wise and free in its mode of taxation; and the effects of this one kind of wisdom and freedom on the happiness of the people, our neighbours on the north and south would do prudently to study and admit. However, yonder lies Jersey; as good a place as Turkey in this respect, and better in many others; so I have no present wish to sail eastwards."

It seemed to Mrs. Le Brocq this afternoon that nothing more was necessary to happiness than to be sailing southwards, with Aaron trimming the sail, Anna looking as tranquil as if she had never been in an excise court or a prison, and the beloved island rising on the sight, in which was Louise, probably with a pretty baby in her arms;—a pretty baby, of course, as every thing belonging to Louise must be pretty. How cheerful looked that picturesque coast from Grosnez to Rozel, as promontory after promontory came into view, tapestried with verdure, or crested with cairns or church towers, and casting each its dark shadow to hide its eastern cove from the declining sun! How busy were those coves to-day! how unlike their usual solitude and stillness! At almost every other time, it was a wonder to see more than a solitary loiterer on the narrow path whose precarious line circled the rocks, and penetrated the bays, now winding up to the steep, now dipping to the margin of the water; and, as for the yellow sands, they were left printless from tide to tide while the islanders were busy about their farmsteads. But now, all was as animated as if the land was joyful at the Le Brocqs' return. Carts were standing in the water to receive the vraise; and the red-capped boy who rode the horse, or the white-sleeved man who wielded his rake in

the vehicle, looked bright in the evening sunshine. Here and there, a horse might be seen swimming home from a distant mass of rock, guided by a youth or maiden mounted on the heaped panniers. Boats were plying from point to point; and on every ledge where marine vegetation could be supposed to flourish without danger of molestation, children might be seen tugging at the tenacious weed, while their fathers did more effectual execution with their scythes. There was not an exposed place all along this coast where the lobsters could safely come up this day to sun themselves; and when the infant crabs should next propose to play hide-and-seek in what was to them a sort of marine jungle, they would find their moist retreat stripped and bare, and must betake themselves again to the tide. High on the beach might be seen parties busy at their work, or busier at their recreation,—spreading and tossing the ooze as if it were hay, or broaching the cider cask, and distributing the vraicking cakes. Mrs. Le Brocq once nearly upset the boat, by lifting up her ponderous self with the view of hailing the mowers on shore;—a feat about as practicable in her case as shaking hands with one on the top of Coutances cathedral. She was glad to reseat herself, and be no worse, and try to wait patiently till the boat should have rounded Archirondel tower, and given her up to tread one of the green paths from St. Catherine’s bay to the ridge, on the other side of which was Louise.

From that ridge might be seen the farm-house, just as was expected. It did not seem to have lost an ivy-leaf, nor to have gained so much as a lichen on its pales. The pigeons looked the very same. The fowls strutted and perched exactly as formerly; and the brook trotted over the stones as if it had never grown tired all these many months.

“Who could have thought we had been away?” was Anna’s first exclamation. Her mother was toiling on too fast to reply; but Aaron gave an unconscious answer to her thought when he presently overtook them, and delivered the result of the observation he had lingered on the ridge to make with his boat glass.

“Who do you think is in the porch, mother?”

“Louise!”

“And who else?—No, not her husband, nor Victorine; but her baby. There is a bundle on her arm; I am sure it must be her baby. Charles is out vraicking, no doubt; and Victorine is milking, I see, behind there. Not so fast, mother, if I may advise. Let me go first. She will be less surprised to see me; and I think she cannot be strong yet, or she would have been out vraicking too.”

It was, in fact, Louise’s first evening out of doors after her confinement. What an evening it was!—Anna relieving her of all household cares; her mother overflowing by turns with affecting narrative and admiration of the infant; Stephen giving a droll turn to every thing; and no paternal restraint to spoil the whole! It was a pity that night was near, and that it would come to put a stop to the interesting questions and answers that abounded.

“When do you gather your apples, love? I have been thinking we must soon be setting about your cider.”

“But, mother, only think of your coming away from London without seeing the king!”

“My dear, your father did write to him: so it is not as if we had had nothing to do with him.”

“And what was the answer like?”

“Bless me, Anna! we never thought more of the king’s answer. But, really, my head was so full of things, I never recollected to send to inquire at the post-office. However, your father will be more mindful, I dare say. Well, Louise, I cannot think how you managed with the calf, to have such a misfortune happen, my dear. I never failed with one all the time I lived here.”

“And you say you never so much as tried in Lambeth. I do wonder you did not manage it, one way or another.”

“Nobody keeps cows there, love, but the brewers; and then the poor beasts live on the grains, and seldom taste fresh grass. They flourish, in a way, too. A great brewer near us had one brought in, intending that it should have the range of the paved yard, on Sundays, when the gates were shut: but the creature had fattened on the grains so that when the people would have let her out, she could not turn in her stall. When they had thinned her a little, so that she might get exercise, it was thought that the fumes of the liquor had affected her head, she capered about so among the casks. But I never heard but what she yielded very good cream, which you do not always see in London.”

“I wonder how they get cream at all, if, as you say, there are no cows but one in each brewery. Perhaps the excise makes the difficulty with taking some of the cream for the king; as they say the tithing man does for the parson.”

Aaron had not heard of an exciseman being yet instructed to thrust himself between the cow and the milk-pail; but he should not be surprised any day to hear of its being made part of an excise officer’s duty to peep in at a dairy lattice, and see what the milk-maids were about with their skimming dishes. Did not he hear horses’ feet outside? Could it be Charles? No; Charles was not coming home to-night. What old friend could it be? And he ran out to see.

“An old enemy,” the guest expected to be called. It was Janvrin, the tax-gatherer. Every body was struck with the strangeness of the circumstance that he should appear on this particular night,—to a party who had had so much to do with taxes since they had met him last. There was something much more astonishing to him in the cordiality of his reception.

“The last time I saw you all here,” said he, “you certainly wished me at the Caskets, or somewhere further off still; and now, you are heaping your good supper upon me, as if I were come to pay money, and not to ask it.”

“For our former behaviour,” replied Aaron, “you may call him to account,”—pointing to Stephen. “You heard him say what taxation was in England,—just paying a trifle more for articles when they were bought;—such a mere trifle as not to be perceived.

He is not laughing in his sleeve now as he was when he told that traveller's tale. It is to our having taken him at his word, Janvrin, and made trial of English taxation, that you owe your different reception to-night."

Stephen expressed his sorrow that his words had taken so much more effect than he had intended. He really would try,—he would do his very best, to avoid telling travellers' tales for the future.

"The oddest thing is," said Janvrin, "that there are some who are no travellers that tell the very same tale. There are dwellers in England,—even speakers in her parliament, who ought to know the condition and interests of the people, who go on to insist that the filching system,—the taxing of commodities,—is the best way of raising a revenue. The wonder to me is why the mouths of such men are not stopped,—how such taxes come to be borne."

"Because it is the ignorant who have to bear the worst of the burden," Stephen thought. "The payment is made unconsciously by those who pay in the long run. The trader feels the grievance at first, and makes an outcry; but when the time comes for him to repay himself out of his customers' pockets, he drops his cry, and nobody takes it up. It saves some people much trouble that all should be hush. But the time cannot be far off when honest men will be set to inquire, and then—"

"And what then?"

"They will report that the truest kindness to the people will be rather to preserve the worst direct tax, be it what it may, that was ever devised, than to go on taxing glass and soap, and many other things nearly as necessary."

"If the people are so little aware as you say, I am afraid that day is a long way off."

"I think it is near at hand; and for this reason; that there has been a beginning made with the excise taxes. The government has set free candles, beer, cider and perry, hides and printed goods. What should hinder their going on to glass and soap, now that the mischief begins to be understood?"

"Especially," said Janvrin, "when they find what it is to have fewer officers to pay, and smaller regiments of spies to provide for, and less trouble in delivering money backwards and forwards, as they have to do now with drawbacks and import duties, and all such troublesome things. It is a pity they should not come here, and see what it is to have houses made of free bricks, and filled with furniture made of untaxed wood, and cleaned with home-made soap, and—but I need not tell the present company what it is to live in Jersey, before or after living in England. The English may have heard a little of our meadows, our cattle, and our fruits, the like to which they cannot make in a season, at their will; but they can hardly have heard much of our taxation, or else they would come and live here by thousands;—or rather, mend their own plans so as not to be beaten by us in butter-selling in their own markets,—not to be obliged to us for helping them underhand with such corn and oil and wine as we do not want,—not

to reflect with shame that we have in proportion five newspapers to their one, and one tax-gatherer to their ten.”

“The comptroller at St. Heliers might well advise me not to go to England,” said Aaron. “He knew well what he meant in saying it. I shall tell him so to-morrow; and the more because I was inclined to take it ill at the time.”

“Saying, I suppose, ‘What’s that to you?’ Hey, Mr. Aaron?”

“Just so. I have had my answer, I assure you. I hope he knows as well how different his office is from that of an English custom-house officer. When he has done his search about wine and spirits, he may put his hands in his pocket and amuse himself. I well remember his doing so, of old. In England, there is not a package that comes on shore that is not suspected; and scarcely a thing that is brought over to be sold for touch or taste, that is not taxed or to be taxed.”

“That is going too far for any body’s interest. If the English would have no customs for protection, but only for revenue, they would presently find out what would bear customs duty without doing harm to any or all. They would tax outwards only what their country produced so much better than other countries that others would go on to buy, notwithstanding the tax; and inwards nothing at all. When China taxes her own tea, and Russia her own tallow, timber, and hides, and England her own iron and slates, and each country, in like manner, its own best produce, and nobody’s else, the curse of the customs will cease from off the earth.”

“Meantime, if the duties were proportioned to the natural prices of articles, and made to fall with the price, instead of rising—”

“Some of our islanders must change their occupation; or fish lobsters in earnest instead of pretence. Then there would be an end of the crowning curse of smuggling.”

Aaron and Stephen made no answer,—the one applying himself once more to his plate, and the other pressing the tax-gatherer again to eat. An interval was left for Louise to repeat to him, while Victorine stood open-mouthed to hear, some of the wonders of life in Lambeth;—the non-existence of cows, the dearth of baked pears and vraic, and the actual presence of a river in which nobody thought of washing clothes. This reminded Victorine to make haste and put away every stray article of apparel before Stephen retired to rest.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VIII.

A WANDERER STILL.

“My mother is still asleep, I suppose,” said Aaron, the next morning, when followed by Anna as he was going forth. “I do not wonder; for I was drowsy enough to have slept on till noon, if I had not had this errand of my father’s to do at the Custom-house. I will take care that the certificate gets to his hands; and then you will soon see him. You shall have news of the pottery from time to time, Anna. Farewell.”

“What do you mean, Aaron? Now, do answer me. Are you not coming back?”

“O, yes; I shall look in upon you now and then at odd times. I may chance to enter when you are all asleep, or to drop in for a basin of soup on a winter day. You do not want me, you know. The rope-walk is Malet’s; and my father will take care of the farm.”

“No, no, Aaron. Nothing will prosper with us if you go out again with those law-breakers on the sea. We shall never be happy if you live by breaking the laws. God will never prosper us.”

“How can you say that, Anna, when I have prospered already as I never thought to prosper? The worst that can happen to me is to have my tobacco seized now and then. I assure you that is all; for I am only a trader. It is no part of my business to meet the coast-guard, and get murdered. They can only seize my goods; and that signifies little with tobacco, which costs me next to nothing, and brings me a fine profit from England, though I sell it far below the legal price there. Such a loss now and then is no punishment compared with the having spies set upon my honest business, as I had in London.”

“I thought that when we came back here, all would be right,” said his weeping sister.

“And so it is. I am getting rich; and I love the sea and the freedom I have upon it. You ought to be glad that I have found a way of life that I like, and left one that I hated.”

Anna only shook her head and wept the more; and then Stephen came groping out; and, guided by Aaron’s voice, approached also to say farewell.

“O, do not go yet,” cried she to Aaron. “When will you come back? When will your conscience be touched about your way of life, about living by cheating the state?”

“Whenever the state shows a little more regard to the consciences of the king’s subjects than it does now. What I do, I have been taught; and you know how, Anna. I shall come back to live by the land whenever they cut off my living by sea. Whenever the English un-tax corn and wine and tobacco, I shall come and be a Jersey farmer, and you shall milk my cows, unless—”

Stephen seized the occasion for a joke about the brown maidens of France, into whose company Aaron's wild occupations sometimes brought him, and about the damsels of the neighbouring islets, who had learned to know the stroke of his oar from all others, as soon as its flash could be seen in the sunshine. Aaron laughed; and laughing, bade his sister again farewell.

She could not even smile. Little did she once think that it could ever make her sad to see Aaron merry; but as little did she then suppose that Aaron would ever live by a lawless occupation. Sadly did she watch him, leading away his companion till both were quite out of sight; and disconsolately did she then sit down in the porch, and grieve over the temptation which drew her brother away from the blossoming valley where his days might have proceeded, as they had begun, in innocence and plenty.

ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

TAXATION.

No. V.

THE

SCHOLARS OF ARNESIDE.

A Tale.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

LONDON:

CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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Online Library of Liberty: Illustrations of Taxation (1. The Park and the Paddock, 2. The Haycock, 3. The Jerseymen Meeting, 4. The Jerseymen Parting, 5. The Scholars of Arneside)

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[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

PREFACE.

In treating of some of our methods of Taxation, it has been my object to show that they are unjust, odious and unprofitable, to a degree which could never be experienced under a system of simple, direct taxation. Believing that such a system must be finally and generally adopted, I have endeavoured to do the little in my power towards preparing and stimulating the public mind to make the demand.

If I had consulted my own convenience, and the value of my little books as literary productions, I should have written less rapidly than I have done. My conviction was and is, that the best means of satisfying the interest of my readers on such a subject as I had chosen, was to publish monthly. I am now about to compensate for my much speaking by a long silence. It costs me some pain to say this: but the great privilege of human life,—that of looking forward, is for ever at hand for stimulus and solace; and I already pass over the few years of preparation, and contemplate the time when, better qualified for their service, I may greet my readers again.

H. M.

July 1st, 1834.

THE SCHOLARS OF ARNESIDE.

Chapter I.

THE MYSTERIES OF WISDOM.

“Come, my maiden: come and tell me. You know what it is I like to hear of a Sunday evening,” said Nurse Ede to her little girl. Nurse was sitting with her hands before her, beside the old round table from which she had cleared away the supper. As it was Sunday evening, she could not work; and nurse had never been taught to read. Little Mildred was standing on the door-sill, watching Owen and Ambrose who were engaged outside. As she turned in at her mother’s summons, she said she thought it rained; which the sheep would be glad of to-morrow.

Mrs. Ede went to the door to call in her boys, lest Owen’s best jacket should suffer by the rain.

“Bless the lads!” cried she. “What are they sprawling on the ground in that manner for?”

“Watching the ants home,” Mildred explained. “There are more ants than ever, mother: all in a line. Ambrose found where they went to at one end; and now he is looking for the other nest. They are running as fast as ever they can go.”

“Though ’tis Sunday,” observed nurse. “Well! ’tis not every body that Sunday is given to: and it is no rule, my dear, because the ants run as fast as ever they can go, that you should not walk quietly to school and to church, as the Lord bids. Come in, my dears, and leave the ants to go to their beds. It is coming up for rain, and mizzles somewhat already. Come in, and tell me about school this morning. I had not the luck to be at a school in my day,” she went on to say, while the boys followed her in, and brushed the dust from each other’s elbows and knees. “I had nothing to tell my poor father of a Sunday evening, of what I had learned. So let me hear now. I am sure you were steady children this morning.”

On the occasion of Sunday evening, the children were indulged with the use of the fine, large footstool, which the late Mrs. Arruther had worked with her own hands as a wedding present for nurse’s mother. When infants, it had been their weekly privilege to show their mother which of the embroidered flowers was a rose, and which a heart’s-ease, and which a tulip; and now that they were somewhat too old to confound the rose and the tulip, they took it in turn to sit on the stool at their mother’s knee, while they imparted their little learning to her who meekly received from her own children some scraps of knowledge which she had been denied the opportunity of gaining during her own young days.

“I warrant I know what set ye to look after the ants,” said she. “There is a bit about the ants in the bible that I have heard read in church. Which of ye can read it to me, I wonder?”

Ambrose looked at Owen, and Owen looked doubtfully at the large old bible which Mildred reverently brought down from the shelf, at a glance from her mother. Owen did not know where, in all that great book, to look for the bit about the ant. While he was turning over the leaves, stopping to consider every great A he came to, Mildred wanted to know whether it was an ant that had tickled her face at church this morning, and hung from her hair by a thread smaller than she could see.

It was of the nature of an ant, her mother thought. It had much the make of an ant: but it was called a money-spinner.

“Does it spin money?” asked Mildred quickly.

“O yes. My father used to tell me it would spin penny pieces from the ground up as high as our thatch.”

“And as high as the mill, perhaps?”

“I dare say. But my father did not tell me that, by reason of the mill not being built in his time.”

“I wish I had not put the money-spinner away,” said Mildred, thoughtfully. “I wish I could get another.”

“Perhaps one will be sent to you one of these days, if you be a steady girl. And you will get penny pieces, and perhaps silver as you grow bigger, if you look to the sheep as your master would have you. Now, boys: have you found about the ant?”

No. They had found “Adam” near the beginning, and had got past “Aaron,” and found that “Abimelech” was too long a word to be the one they wanted. The “Ands” abounded so as to tantalize and perplex them exceedingly; and when Owen recollected that “ant” might begin with a small “a,” both came to a full stop. Their mother was kind enough, however, to say that another part of the bible would do as well. They might read her the piece they had read in school in the morning.

Owen began. He did his best; never looking off the book, or sparing himself the trouble of spelling every word that he did not know: but his mother gained little by what he read. He mixed his spelling with his reading so completely, and varied his tone so little, not knowing that he should render the stops as evident to his mother’s ear as they were to his eye, that she could make nothing of the sense. The passage was about some priests carrying the ark over Jordan; and this was a puzzle to her. Her principal idea about Jordan was that almonds came thence; and she now therefore learned for the first time that almonds came like fish out of the water: and how the ark, which she knew had carried Noah and his family, and a pair of every living creature in the world, should itself be carried on the shoulders of a few clergymen, was what she could not clearly comprehend. It happened that Owen had been told that there were two arks, and the difference between them; but he did not remember to explain this: so his mother, who would not for the world wonder at any thing that could be found in the bible, supposed that it was all right, sighed to think that her poor husband had not lived to witness his eldest boy’s learning, and then smiled at Ambrose when it became his turn to try.

Ambrose was in the class below Owen. At present, he could read only by spelling every word. While he was about it, Mildred’s eyes and attention wandered. The rain was now pattering against the lattice, and dripping from the thatch in little streams, which a ray from the parting clouds in the west made to glitter like silver. Then the light grew almost into sunshine on the wall of the room, and on the shelf where nurse laid up the apparatus of her art. Mrs. Ede was employed by her few opulent neighbours as a nurse only; but she was regarded as also a doctor by the poor residents in the village of Arneside. She held herself in readiness, not only to nurse them, night or day, when they were ill, but to administer to them from the phials and bottles of red, yellow, and black liquids which stood on her shelf. These medicines now shone in the western light so brilliantly as to catch her little daughter’s eye; and, while looking, Mildred observed two or three new articles of a strange construction which lay upon the shelf, or hung against the wall. She could not wait till Ambrose had done reading to ask what they were; and she was answered as she might have known she would be,—by a mysterious look, and a finger laid upon the lips. It was not only that Ambrose was reading, but that it was utterly in vain to question Mrs. Ede about the circumstances of her art. Whether she was persuaded that knowledge as to her means would destroy faith in her practice, or that she wished to preserve a becoming degree of awe in her little ones by mystery in the one matter in which she was wiser than they,—it so happened that they had never enticed her into the slightest

confidence respecting the furniture of the south wall of her room. When Ambrose brought in the roots he had been directed to procure on the heath, the basket and rusty knife were gravely delivered up, and received without a smile, and with only a word of inquiry as to whether the roots had grown on a moonshiny or shady piece of turf; and whether the dew was off or on when they were dug up. Sometimes, when she was believed to be gone out for the day, one little sinner placed a stool for another to climb, that the mysteries might be handled and smelled as well as looked at. Tasting was out of the question, so dreadful were the stories which they had heard of little people who had fallen down dead with the mere drawing of a forbidden cork. Once, also, nurse returned unexpectedly when Owen had come in from the mill, and Mildred from the moor, and they were trying experiments with the longest of her bandages; Owen in a corner, holding one end, and his sister at the opposite corner, turning herself round and round to see how many times the long strip would fold about her body. What she heard said by way of warning to Ambrose, when the exposure was made to him, might have taught her the uselessness of questions: but she forgot the incident of the bandage when she this evening offended again by her curiosity. She did what she could to profit by Ambrose's reading, rocking herself and crossing her arms in imitation of her mother; but her eyes would still turn upon the shelf, and her heart could not help envying the kitten which had made a daring leap up, and was now thrusting in its nose, and making a faint jingle among the sacred vessels.

"This is what you should attend to, my dear," nurse explained, laying her hand upon the bible, when the boy was at length taking breath after his task. "The Lord gave the bible for little girls to understand; and they should not ask what it is not proper for them to know."

"How are we to find out what it is proper for us to know?" asked Owen.

His mother told him that there would always be somebody at hand to tell him;—either Mr. Waugh, or the parson, or herself. She would do her best, she was sure.

"I shall not ask Mrs. Arruther, I can tell her," observed Owen. "She never lets Mr. Waugh alone about the Sunday school; and she has done all she can to set the parson against it."

"She is very strong in her mind against that school, indeed, Owen; and many's the time when she has been sharp with me for letting you learn, having herself a bad opinion of learning for such as we are. And often enough I have been uneasy about what I ought to do: but, having great confidence in Mr. Waugh, and having always heard my poor father and others say that a little learning is a fine thing for those that can get it, I hoped I was not out of my duty when I let you go to the school, as Mr. Waugh desired. And I hope Ambrose and Mildred are both very thankful for being allowed to go, as well as you, though not belonging to the paper-mill, and able only to take their schooling every other week, when it is not their turn with the sheep."

"Ambrose can't keep up in the class though, as if he went every Sunday, like the other boys."

“The more reason for his making the best of his time when he is there. Only think, Ambrose, what it would have been for you to be out on the hills every Sunday, away from the church, and no more able to read your bible than I am. I trust, my dear, that you will be as well able as Owen, though not perhaps so soon, (but you will have time before you to go on learning when he is done,) to read a chapter to me when I grow old, and maybe not able to hear the clergyman in church. But you must none of you be bent upon learning more than it is proper for you to know, lest you should bring me to think that Mrs. Arruther has been right all the time, and that I have been doing harm when I was most anxious for your good. Why can’t my little maiden,” she went on to say, “play with the kitten, or look out at the door, as well as be for ever glancing up at that shelf?”

Mildred lost no time in availing herself of this permission to play. Puss had disappeared; but when called, she showed herself through a hole in the crazy wall of the cottage, and jumped upon Mildred all the way as she went to the door.

“Me! where are all the clouds gone?” exclaimed Mildred, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking up into the sky. “ ’Twas right black when you called me in; and now it is all blue. There’s not a cloud.”

“They are all fetched up above the sky, my dear, to make a fine Sunday evening.”

“I doubt whether the sheep will like it altogether as we do,” observed Ambrose. “There is a mist on their walk yonder; and it is my belief their coats are heavy with wet at this very time.”

Ambrose was very consequential about sheep, there being no one at home to contradict anything he might say about creatures that he had more to do with than either mother or brother. All that could be done was to question whether it signified to the sheep whether they were more in a mist on a Saturday or a Sunday evening. If it made no difference to them, and they were hidden and out of sight, it remained a fine Sunday evening to people below; and that was enough to be thankful for.

While the whole party was gazing with shaded eyes towards the upland which was enveloped with a white cloud, through whose folds neither beast nor man could at present be discerned, somebody seized little Mildred by the shoulders from behind. Of course, being startled, she screamed.

“Dear me, Ryan, is it you?” exclaimed nurse to the old man who had approached unawares. “And all dripping with the rain,—your sack and all,—and we have no fire! But I will get one presently. Boys, bring in some furze from the shed; and Mildred, strike a light. Don’t think of standing in your wet clothes, neighbour. But who would have expected to see you travelling with your sack on a Sunday?”

Ryan would not be blamed for making a push to see an old friend. He had a mind for an hour’s chat with nurse Ede, if she would let him dry his sack, and lay his head upon it, in any corner of her cottage. As for the hour’s chat, nurse was quite willing; and Ryan was welcome to house-room: but she was engaged, she was sorry to say, to

sit up with Mrs. Arruther to-night. She had promised to be at the Hall by nine o'clock. No time was lost. The fierce heat of the burning furze soon made Ryan as dry and warm as on any summer's noon, and quite ready for chat and bread and eggs.

"So the poor old lady is ill, is she?" said he. "What, is she very bad?"

"Very bad. With all the trying, there is no getting down to the wound; and she is sadly afflicted with spasms in the blood that make her heart turn round till I sometimes doubt whether it will ever come right again. She has awful nights."

"If all be true that is said," declared Ryan, "there is enough happening to bend her heart till it breaks."

How? What? Who was doing any harm to Mrs. Arruther?—There was no use in the children's asking and listening. This was one of the pieces of knowledge not meant for them. They could find out no more than that the news related to Mr. Arruther, the lady's son, and the member for a small borough in the district; and that the gentleman had done something very wicked. What was his crime could not be discovered. Whether he had overlooked seams in sorting rags, or let a lamb stray, or torn his clothes in the briers, and forgotten to mend them, or played with the hassock at church, must be ascertained hereafter: but some one of these offences it must be, as the children had heard of no others.

"And what is your news, Ryan?" asked his hostess in her turn. "Sure you must have some, so far as you travel this way and that?"

"Ay; I have news. I have news plenty; such as you have hardly chanced to hear in your day, I fancy."

"Why, really! and yet I have lived in the time when all the news about Buonaparte used to come; when our people used to be hanging the flag from the church almost every month, for a victory or something. It can hardly be anything greater than that. Hark, children, hark! Mr. Ryan is going to tell us some news. But I hope, Ryan, it is such as may be told on a Lord's day evening."

"Certainly. If my news be not diligently spread, we may chance soon to have no more Lord's day evenings. You may look shocked; but what is to come of all Christian things when the heathen come upon us? and what heathens are so bad as the Turks, you know?"

Mrs. Ede quailed with consternation, never having heard of the Turks, and having no other idea about heathens than that the bible called them very bad people, and that (for so she had always taken for granted) they lived upon a heath—probably after the manner of gipsies. She was afraid this bad news was too true, so many opportunities as Mr. Ryan had for knowing what was going on abroad.

"Indeed you are right, Mrs. Ede. It was a man from abroad that told me. He has not been three months over from Hamburg with his lot of rags from the Mediterranean;

and he informs me that the Turks are coming up to take Russia and Europe, and make Turkish slaves of all the Christians.”

“The Lord have mercy! And then, I suppose, I had better not let my boy and girl go out on the hills after the sheep. It will be safer to keep them at home, won’t it? I would do without their little wages, rather than that they should light upon any Turks under the hedges, or in any lane.”

“You will have notice in good time, neighbour. I myself will endeavour to let you know, the first minute I can. And if I don’t, you will find it out by all the church-bells tolling, and the battles on all sides through the country. O, yes; every bell that has a clapper will toll, partly to give notice, and partly to see what the Turks can do against the Christian bells of our Christian churches. Yes, every bell in the land will toll.”

“Same as when the princess died,” said Mildred. “I heard the great bell all the way from P— that day, when I was on the hill-top. Maybe I’ll hear it again, if the wind come from that way.”

“Indeed you shall not be on the hill-top, child, the day that the Turks come. Could you give us an idea when it will be, Ryan? It would be a pity but some of the ewes should yeave first, if it is not dictating to the Lord to say so.”

The enemy could hardly be coming just yet, Ryan thought, as the Government was going to change the Parliament, in hopes of getting one that would be more fit to preserve the empire than the present. Mr. Arruther would be soon coming into the neighbourhood to manage his election; and that event might serve in some sort as a token.

“Mrs. Arruther would have known all about the Turks, if everything had been right,—you know what I mean?” said Mrs. Ede to her guest. “But I suppose, as it is, I had better not mention anything of danger to the poor lady, sick as she is.”

“By no means, unless she breaks the subject to you. Tell her other sorts of news. Tell her that I and my sack are likely soon to come travelling at the rate of a hundred miles an hour.”

“O, Mr. Ryan, where will you find the horses that will bring you at that rate? Why, a hundred horses would not bring you so quick as that, if you had money to hire them!”

Ryan smiled, and said that he meant to travel at this rate without horses at all. Ay; they might wonder at any one travelling at such a rate on foot; but the way was this:—there was a new sort of road going to be made, on which never a horse was to set foot, and where, by paying half-a-crown to get upon it, a man and his baggage,—and a woman too,—might do as he had said. It was to be called a rail-road.

Because it was to be railed in, no doubt, to keep off those who could not pay half-a-crown. Now, if the government could keep the enemy off this road, and let all its own people upon it, all might run away, so as to leave the Turks no chance of following. This seemed to open a prospect of escape; and nurse rose in better spirits, to put on

her bonnet to go to Mrs. Arruther's. A curious picture was before her mind's eye, of Ryan's gliding along a rail-road with his sack on his back, as fast as she had sometimes gone in dreams,—for all the world like boys sliding on the ice in winter. The wonder was that, if Ryan spoke truth, this curious road would be quite as efficacious on the hottest day of summer as after a week's frost.

When she had finished her little arrangements for the comfort of her guest, and bidden him good night, she called Ambrose out after her, and desired him to fetch cheese from the village grocer's for Ryan's breakfast, the moment the shop should be opened. If he was there by the time the first shutter was taken down, he might cut for himself and Mildred a quarter of the cheese he should bring home. It would give a relish to their bread when they should have been after the sheep for a couple of hours, and feel ready for their breakfast on the hill-side.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter II.

MATERNAL ANTICIPATIONS.

As there must be no communication with Mrs. Arruther about the most important article of Ryan's news, nurse would have had no objection to talk it over a little on her way through the village; but she found no opportunity to do so. There were no walkers to be seen enjoying the cool of the evening by the side of the placid Arne, as it flowed on towards the fall where it turned the wheel of Mr. Waugh's paper-mill. There were no husbands and wives sitting outside their doors, after having put their children to sleep. There were no lingerers in the churchyard, talking over the sermon of the morning. A low, confused murmur of suppressed voices issued from the narrow opening of the ale-house door, as it stood ajar, and let a gleam of light from within fall across the road. Almost every interior was visible from being more or less lighted up; but no one offered encouragement for a word of conversation in passing. Mrs. Dowley was slapping her boy Tom because he would not go to sleep as she bade him; and Mrs. Green, whose children were more obedient in this one respect, was dozing with her head upon the table, by way of whiling away the time till her husband should come home from the Rose. Kate Jeffery was reading to her grandfather as he sat in his great chair; and it would not do to interrupt her, lest it should be the bible that she was reading. A knot of lads were gathered about the churchyard gate; but their voices sounded so rude, that nurse, who was a somewhat timid woman, made a circuit to avoid passing through them. The porter at Mrs. Arruther's let her in with a studious haste which seemed to intimate that he thought her late; and she did not stay to be told so. In the housekeeper's room she only tarried to see that her close cap looked neat, and to pin on the shawl she always wore when she sat up at night. Mrs. Arruther had asked for her six times in the last ten minutes; so there was not a moment to be lost.

"You were to come at nine o'clock, and it is ten minutes past, nurse," said the sick lady. "This is always the way people treat me,—as if there was not a clock in Arneside."

There were several clocks in Arneside, by one of which it was two minutes past nine, by another it wanted a quarter to nine; a third was at half-past eight, and a fourth was striking three as nurse passed its door. But Mrs. Ede never contradicted her patients. She told of Ryan's arrival, and was admonished that no guest of hers could possibly be of half so much importance as Mrs. Arruther.

"I know how it is, nurse. It is those children of yours that can do nothing for themselves, any more than any other children that are educated as the fashion is now. They will want you to wash their faces for them, and put them to bed, as long as they live, if you go on sending them to that Sunday school."

Nurse was very sorry to hear this. She did not know, in such a case, what they were to do to get their faces washed when she should be gone to her grave, where she hoped

to be long before her three children. But indeed she must say for her little folks that they could all put themselves to bed, and had done it, even the youngest, these two years past.

“Ay, ay; that was before you sent them to the school. Keep them there a little longer, and they will be fit for nothing at all. You never will believe any warning I give you about it; but I tell you again, the three last housemaids I had this year, one after the other, were the worst that ever entered my doors; and they could all read and write. What do you think of that? O, my head! My head!”

Nurse thought it was time that the draught should be taken, and proposed to smooth the pillow, and shade the light. This done, she wound up the lady’s watch, and sat down behind the curtain, in hopes that the patient would sleep. Of this, however, there seemed but little chance. Mrs. Arruther tossed about, and groaned out her wonder why she could not go to sleep like other people, till nurse was obliged to take notice, and ask whether there was anything that she could do for her.

“Do! yes, to be sure. Bring out the light from wherever you have hidden it. It is hard enough not to be able to go out and see things, as I have done all my life till now; and here you won’t let me see what is in my own room. Where are you going to put the light? Not under that picture. You know I can’t bear that picture. And, mind, to-morrow morning—Bless me! what do you lift up your hand in that manner for?”

Nurse could only beg pardon. She had made an involuntary gesture of astonishment on hearing that the lady could not bear that beautiful picture of her own only son,—that picture which represented him in his chubby boyhood, standing at his mother’s knee, with hoop in hand. She was told not to be troublesome with her wonder, but to see that the picture was carried up into the lumber garret to-morrow, and something put in its place to hide its marks on the wall; anything that would not stare down upon people as they lay in bed, as that child’s eyes did. By rousing the wearied maid, just as she was falling asleep, nurse obtained a muslin apron, which, when she stood on the table, she could hang over the picture: and two or three pins, judiciously applied below, obviated all danger of the veil rising with any breath of air, so as to disclose the features of the boy.

“You had better take warning, and look to your children in time, nurse, before they grow up to plague you as my boy has plagued me.”

She had drawn back the curtain, and now showed herself as much disposed for conversation as if she had taken a waking instead of a sleeping draught.

“And you lay it all to education, ma’am? You think the university to blame for it? Well! ’tis hard to say.”

“What put such a notion into your head? Who ever dreams of objecting to the university for gentlemen? You would not have my son brought up as ignorant as a ploughboy; would you? No, no. I have done my duty by him in that way. He had the best-recommended tutors I could get for him, and every advantage at the university

that was to be had; and the best proof of what was done for him is the credit he got there, and the prizes, and the reputation. He is a very fine scholar. Nobody denies that.”

Nurse pondered the practicability of putting the question she would have liked to have had answered; whether learning had had the same effect upon Mr. Arruther that the lady had anticipated for Owen and Ambrose. Nurse would fain know whether Mr. Arruther could wash his own face, and put himself to bed.

“Let us hope, ma’am, that the young gentleman will live and learn. If he is not able to do little things now, perhaps—”

“Little things! What sort of little things?”

“Well, ma’am, I thought if your late house-maids could not polish the fire-irons, or make your bed to your liking, and if you fear that my boys should not keep themselves clean when I am gone, because of their learning, perhaps. . . . But indeed, when I once saw the young gentleman, his gloves were as white as my apron, and the sunshine came back from the polish of his boots. I never saw a neater gentleman.”

“He is a puppy,” replied the tender mother. “I suppose it was that dandy show of his that caught the eyes of the low creature he has married. If I never get the better of this illness, she shall have none of my clothes to wear. No shopkeeper’s daughter shall be seen in the laces my mother left to me. I had rather give some of them to you, nurse, at once.”

“God forbid, ma’am! What should I do with laces? Such as I!”

“Very true. Now it is strange that a sensible woman like you, who knows what is proper, in her own case, should be so wrong about her children. What have they to do with education any more than you have with laces?”

Nurse took refuge under the sanction of the clergyman and of Mr. Waugh; and protested that she had as little idea of sending Owen and Ambrose to the university, as of asking that Mildred should wear the lady’s family Valenciennes and Mechlin.

“Well; I wonder what it is that you would have! I can’t make out what it is that you would be at!”

“Ma’am, if I had all I wished for—but I may as well be setting on a cup-full of broth to warm, as I fancy you may take a liking to a little, by-and-by.”

The lady let nurse do this. When she was tired of wondering whether she could take any broth when it should be warm, she languidly said,—

“Go on. What would you have for your children? Pray remember what I have heard you say yourself—that pride comes before a fall.”

“And a much greater one than I said that before me, ma’am. But I would not have my children made proud, because I should be sorry they should fall below what they are. If I had my wish, it would be that Owen should have work at the mill as long as he lives, so as to be pretty sure of eighteen shillings a week for a continuance; and that he should marry such a girl as Kate Jeffery, who would take as much care of his house as I would myself; and that they should never want for shoes and stockings for their children’s feet. And much the same for Ambrose.”

“Is that all? They might have all this without reading and writing.”

“Perhaps so, ma’am; but Kate reads to her grandfather of a Sunday evening, as I saw when I passed to-night; and the neighbours think, as well as I, that it is the boys that get on best with their learning that go straightest to their work; not swinging on the churchyard gate, nor swearing, to get a look that they may make game of from grave people passing by. As for Mildred, I don’t well know what to wish. ’Tis hard work for poor girls when they settle and have their families early: but then, I should be loth to leave her to live solitary in our cottage, spending her days all alone upon the hills. However, that will be as the Lord pleases. Meantime, I should best like that fifteen years hence, when the boys will be perhaps settled away, my girl should be keeping our place clean for me, and giving me her arm to church, and helping me with her little learning when, as often happens, I am at a loss to answer, for want of knowing. I have no wish to be idle, I am sure. I hope to knit her stockings and make her petticoats still, if she will clean the cupboard out, and entertain the clergyman better than I can do.”

The clergyman was not present to start the inquiry whether such were the sum total of the purposes for which spiritual beings were brought into a world teeming with spiritual influences. If he had been there, he might not, perhaps, have got a curtsy from nurse by telling her that her views were quite proper, and that she rightly understood what to desire for her young folks. Perhaps he might have thought little better of Mrs. Arruther’s aspirations.

“My boy has cruelly disappointed me,” she declared; “and yet I wished for no more than I had a right to expect from him. I wished that he should be a good scholar; and so he is. I wished that he should have the looks and manners of a gentleman.”

“And sure, ma’am, so he has?”

“O yes: and I hoped to see him in parliament, if it was only for once; and I carried this point, and mean to carry it again, if I can. He is in parliament with my money, and he shall have enough for the next election. But there’s an end. Instead of marrying as I wished, he has taken up with a tradesman’s daughter; and he may make the best of his bargain. Not an acre of my land, nor a shilling of my money that I can leave away, shall he have. If I am disappointed in him, I will have my satisfaction. I will do what I can to show people that they should take care what they expect from their children. He sha’n’t have all the laugh on his side. He sha’n’t say for nothing that my behaviour to him is unpardonable.”

Nurse wondered whether at the university they taught to forgive and forget. If they did, perhaps the young gentleman would be bent upon making up matters, if he thought himself put upon; and then there might be a coming round on the other side.

“I don’t know what they do there about forgiving; but I am sure they teach the young men to forget. He never wrote to me above once, the last year he was there; and that was for money. And he never thought more of his cousin Ellen, though I told him to marry her, and requested him to send her down a lap-dog like mine. When I asked him what he meant by it, he said Ellen and all had entirely slipped his memory. I told him my mind, pretty plainly; so I suppose it will slip his memory that I live hereabouts, when he comes down to his election. If he tries the gate—”

“O, ma’am! You will not turn him away?”

“No: it might cost him his election; and I don’t wish that. I should miss my own name from the newspapers then; and it would be hard to lose my pleasure in the newspapers. I will do nothing to hurt his election. He shall be let in to see me; and then I will say to him, ‘All that lawn and those fields, and all this house and the plate would have been yours very soon, (for I can’t live long,) if you had married your cousin Ellen, as I bade you: but it is too late for that now; and Ellen’s husband shall have every —, —What do you look in that way for, nurse? I am not going to leave it into another name. Ellen’s husband shall take my name before he touches a shilling.’”

“And if a judgment should come upon us meantime, ma’am. If the heathen should—Did not you say there is to be a new election? Is not that the same as the government getting a new parliament?”

“To be sure.”

“And that is done when a danger is thought to be at hand, is not it?”

“Not always; and if it was, no harm can come to my property. The deeds are all in my lawyer’s hands,—in his strong-box,—safe enough.”

It was plain that Mrs. Arruther knew nothing about the approach of the Turks; and it would be cruel to tell her, when she might very likely die before they appeared in Arneside.

“What are you afraid of, nurse? I am sure you are in a panic about something. It is too soon for your boys to be marrying against your will, I suppose?”

“Yes, thank God. And they will never be able to marry so far below them as your young gentleman may do; for the reason that they will never stand so high as he. But yet I can fancy that if my Owen took to a giggling jade, with her hair hanging about her ears, and a sharp voice, it would weigh heavy on my heart.”

“And your money would weigh light in his pocket, hey?”

“I shall have no money to leave, ma’am; and as to—”

“No money to leave! I dare say. You never will have money to leave while you throw away your services as you do. I did wonder at you last week, when you managed to find somebody else to sit up with old Mr. Barnes, that you might nurse Widow Wilks’s child. I saw beforehand what would come of it. The child died, just the same as if you had been with Mr. Barnes; and you missed your chop, and brandy and water, and the handsome pay you would have had; and Mr. Barnes is a nice, mild old gentleman, that you might have been glad to nurse. I thought you knew your duty to your children better than to waste your services in any such way.”

Nurse was very sorry the lady was displeased with what she had done. She had acted for the best, thinking what an aggravation it would be of the weary widow’s grief for her child if she fancied, after its death, that it might have been saved by good nursing. Having acted for the best, she hoped her children would not remember these things against her when she was gone.

“You seem to be always thinking how things will be after you are gone. What will all that signify when you are cold in your grave?”

“It seems natural, ma’am, when one has children to care for. I hardly think that God gives us children only that we may play with them while they sprawl about and amuse us, and make use of them while they are subject to our wills, having no steady one of their own. I think, by the yearning that mothers have after their sons and daughters when they are grown up into men and women, that it must be meant for us to keep a hold over their hearts when they have done acting by our wills. And so, when I talk of what is to happen when I am gone, it is with the feeling that I dare not go and appear before God without doing my best to have my children think of me as one that tried to do her duty by God and them.”

“But if Owen married as you said, how should he, for one, think pleasantly of you?”

“Indeed I am afraid the thought of his folly would rankle. But my endeavour would be to make the lightest and best of what could not be helped. I would tell him that there could be no offence to me in his judging for himself in a case where nobody has a right to judge for him; and I should make no difference between him and the rest. My father’s bible is, as they know, to go to the one that can read in it best when I am on my death-bed; and the other few things are to be equally divided. My girl is to have my spinning-wheel; and the deal table will be Owen’s; and the chair and three stools—”

“Those things are to your children, I suppose, much the same as my lawn and this house to my son?”

“I dare say they would be, ma’am; and, in some sense, all property that is left by the dying to the living seems to be much alike, whether it be great, or whether it be little. To my mind, it is not so much the use of a legacy to give pleasures to those that can enjoy little pleasure when a parent or other near friend is taken away, as to leave the comfort of feeling that the departed wished to be just and kind. It is all very well, you see, that my girl should have the use of my spinning-wheel; but if it was made of King

Solomon's cedar wood, Mildred's chief pleasure would be to think, while she spun, that I remembered her kindly when I lay dying; and for this, a spinning-wheel does as well as a room full of pictures, or a mint of money. And when I see a family quarrelling and going to law about their father's legacies, I cannot but think how much better it would be for them if each of the daughters had but a spinning-wheel, and each of the sons neither more nor less than a deal table, or the chair their father sat in.—But," lowering her voice, "here am I chattering on without thinking, while you are just asleep, which I am glad to see."

Whether from a disposition to sleep, or from some other cause, Mrs. Arruther's eyes were closed; and she did not move while nurse once more softly drew the curtain. When, in the silence, nurse began to consider what, in the fullness of her heart, she had been saying, she was thunderstruck at her own want of good manners in uttering what must have seemed intended for a reproof to the lady about her conduct to her son. Her heart beat in her throat as one sentence after another of her discourse came back upon her memory. What was she that she should be lecturing Mrs. Arruther?—But perhaps the lady had been too drowsy to listen. It was to be hoped so, rather than that she should suppose that nurse was paying her off for her opposition to the children's going to the school.

When sufficiently composed for the nightly duty which she never omitted, nurse added to her usual prayers the petition that this suffering lady might be spared till she could see clearly what it was just that she should do towards the son who had displeased her. Before she had finished, there was another movement, and a mutter of "O dear!" from within the curtain.

"I hoped you had been asleep, ma'am. Can't you find rest?"

"No, nurse; but you cannot help that. I will see my lawyer to-morrow. It is too late to be thinking about wills to-night. But I don't believe I shall sleep a wink to-night. Do you take that broth, nurse. I cannot bear the thought of it. It prevents my getting to sleep. I believe I shall never close my eyes all night."

Nurse really thought she would, if she would only take the other draught, and settle her mind to trouble herself about nothing till to-morrow.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter III.

LESSONS ON THE HILLS.

“Fetch down a plate from the cupboard, Ambrose, and cover up the beer, while I cut the cheese. I suppose we may have a quarter of the cheese, as mother said,” observed Mildred to Ambrose, as the early sun was peeping in through the upper panes of the cottage lattice the next morning.

“Yes; we may have the quarter. I was at the shop before the first shutter was down. Here—here’s a plate for Mr. Ryan’s cheese. We will carry ours in the paper I brought it in. How shall I keep puss from getting at the things? Is not that Mr. Ryan stirring?—Mr. Ryan! Mr. Ryan!” (calling through the door.) “Please to look to your breakfast here, that the cat does not get it. We are going now; and Owen is gone to the mill; and mother is not home yet.”

“Off with you, lad!” answered Ryan from within. “Leave the cat to me. And if you can pick up any rags for me among the briers, you know I always give honest coppers for them; and yet more for tarred ropes, if such an article comes in your way.”

“Tarred ropes! How should we get them? If tar by itself would do, I could help you to some of that. The shepherds always keep tar against the shearing. Would tar by itself do?”

The loud laugh from within showed Ambrose that he had said something foolish; and he hastily departed, supposing that Mr. Ryan had been making a joke of him.

Cool and moist as all had been in the valley as they passed, the children found that the dew was gone from the furze-bushes on the hills, and that the sun was very warm.

“What had we better do?” asked Mildred, contemplating the yellow cheese, which began to shine almost as soon as she opened the paper. “Shall we eat it directly? I think I am beginning to be very hungry; are not you? And it will be half melted, and the bread dry, if we carry it about in the sun.”

“Mother said we were to keep the sheep for a couple of hours first,” was Ambrose’s reply. “And besides, I have some leaves to get for her; and they won’t be fit if I let them stay till the dew is off; and it is off already, except under the shady side of the bushes. Put the breakfast under the shady side of this bush; I’ll look to it.—Do you go about and get some rags, if you can find any. The briers and hedges are the most likely places.”

“There won’t be any Turks under the hedges, will there?” asked Mildred, lowering her voice.

“I don’t know. I don’t rightly know what Turks are; but if anything happens amiss, call out loud to me, and I’ll come. Go; make haste. The sheep are quiet enough.”

“And how are we to know when two hours are over?”

“We must each guess, I suppose; and if we don’t agree, we’ll draw lots with a long spike of grass and a short one. The long one for me, you know, because I’m the eldest.”

In forty minutes, both were agreed that two hours were over; and each complimented the other on the fruits of the morning’s work. Ambrose exhibited a handful of leaves, which he placed under a big stone, that they might not be blown away; and Mildred brought the foot of a worsted stocking, which she had found in a ditch; a corner of a blue cotton handkerchief with white spots, which had been impaled on a furze bush; and a bit of white linen as large as the palm of her little hand, with twenty holes in it. How many coppers would Ryan be likely to give her for this treasure?

Ambrose rejected the worsted article, to which his sister gave a sigh as she saw it thrown backwards among a group of sheep, who scampered away in their first terror, but soon gathered together to look at the fragment. The other two might be worth the third part of a farthing, if Mr. Ryan should be in a liberal mood, Ambrose thought.

“I wonder how much paper they will make,” Mildred observed. “Mr. Ryan says they are to go into his sack with the rest of his rags, for paper. Mother did not tell you what she wanted the leaves for, I suppose?”

“No; and I sha’n’t ask her. Do you ever hear people talk about what mother makes?”

“Why, yes; I do. Molly at Mrs. Arruther’s was telling the gipsy woman one day about mother; and she said she had some strange secrets. And then they asked me what one thing meant, and another. But they did not mean me to hear all they said, any more than Mrs. Dowley when she winked at her husband, and glanced down at mother’s apron where some green was peeping out: but it was only cabbage that time. They all think her a very wise doctor.”

“How they do send after her when they are ill! Mr. Yapp said one day that she would be wise to bring up one of us to be a doctor after her: but Mrs. Dowley was there then, and she said it could not be, because mother’s was of the nature of a gift that could not be taught.—Here is your other bit of cheese. Will you have it now, or keep it till dinner?”

Mildred had intended to reserve part of her cheese for dinner; but having now nothing particular to do, and the sheep offering nothing which required her attention, the whole of the delicacy at length disappeared, crumb by crumb. Then she lay back, looking at a flight of birds that now met, now parted, now crossed each other in all directions, high in the air. Ambrose meanwhile stretched himself at length, with his face to the ground, watching a hairy brown caterpillar, which he took the liberty of bringing back with a gentle pinch by the tail, as often as it flattered itself that it was

getting beyond his reach. He presently wished that they had a pair of scissors with them.

“Won’t the knife do as well?” Mildred languidly inquired.

“No. I want to cut off the creature’s hair.”

“What creature?” asked Mildred, starting up, but seeing no creature with hair, but a remote donkey and herself.

“Here: this young gentleman,” replied her brother, exhibiting the writhing caterpillar on the palm of his brown hand. Well might the creature feel uncomfortable; for this hand which had carried cheese must have been far from fragrant, in comparison with the thyme-bed on which the poor caterpillar had been disporting himself. What Ambrose wanted was to see whether it would come out a common green caterpillar, when stripped of its long sleek hairs. The process of plucking was tried in the absence of scissors: but the material was too fine. The knife was next applied, but the creature was destined never to be shaven and shorn. A slip of the knife cut it in two, and fetched blood on Mildred’s finger at the same time. The perturbation thus caused completely awakened her, and she was ready for the sport of shepherd and shepherd’s dog. For a very long time, Ambrose supported his dignity of shepherd. He strapped himself round with his sister’s pinafore and his own for a plaid; took long steps; wielded a thick stick, and made grand noises to the flock; while Mildred went on all fours till her back was almost broken, and barked all the while, like any dog. The sheep were silly enough to scud before her to the very last, as much alarmed as at first, till she was obliged to stop to laugh at them. All play must come to an end; and by-and-by the children were stretched, panting, on the very spot where they had breakfasted. To panting succeeded yawning; and it began to occur to both that they had yet a long day to pass before the sheep would be penned. It was against the rules of their employment that both should sleep at the same time; and, as Mildred could not keep awake, it was necessary for her brother to watch. She was not, as usual, wakened by his calling out so loud to some of his charge as to rouse her before her dream was done. She finished it, opened her eyes, sat up and stretched herself; and Ambrose was too busy to take notice.

“I had such a queer dream!” observed Mildred.—Her brother did not hear.

“I say, Ambrose, I dreamt that I was sorting rags at the mill, and there was a caterpillar upon every one of them; and—What have you got there, Ambrose? Did you hear what I said?”

“Come here,” replied her brother. “Here is a story! Help me to make it out.”

“A story! what, upon the very piece of paper that held the cheese! What is the story like? Tell me. You know I can’t read so well as you.”

“But you can help me with this part, perhaps. I will tell you what I have read when I know this word. The man would not go in somewhere; and this word tells where.”

Mildred pored over the soiled piece of print, and pronounced presently that the word in question signified something about a comb. In her spelling-book, c-o-m-b spelled comb. But of the rest of the word,—“inat,”—“in,”—What could it be?

“It ends with ‘nation.’ ‘Comb’—‘nation.’ Well: I must let that alone. There was a man that would not go into this place,—whatever it is,—and the people that were in it were angry because he went to his work.”

“Because he did not go to his work, I suppose you mean.”

“No; because he would go when they bade him not. And they watched for him one day when he was going to work, and his little boy with him. They call him a little boy, though he was eleven years old. They flew upon the man, and thumped him and kicked him as hard as ever they could. And when the boy cried, and begged they would not use his father so cruelly, one of them caught up a thick rope, and beat the boy till it was a shocking sight to see him.”

“They were cruel wretches. I wonder whether there was anybody near to go for the constable? Did they get a constable?”

“I suppose so, for the people were asked how they dared to beat people so.”

“And what did they say?”

“This that I can’t make out, about going in and not going in: but they got a good scolding,—and that is as far as I have got.”

“See what is to be done to them, and whether there is anything more about the boy.”

Another half-hour’s spelling and consultation revealed that the child had pulled one of the assailants down by the leg, and thus turned the fury of the man upon himself; that it was doubtful whether the boy would recover; and that, this being the case, the decision of the magistrates was that—

Here came the jagged edges of the torn newspaper, instead of the magistrates’ decision. This was very disagreeable indeed. Not to know what became of the aggressors, and whether the brave boy lived or died, was cruel. Ambrose threw away the paper, and grew cross. Mildred’s consolations,—that very likely the boy was well by this time, and she had no doubt the cruel people were put in prison,—were of no use. A better device than to imagine the issue suggested itself to Ambrose. He would go and ask Mr. Yapp. The paper having come from Mr. Yapp’s shop, he no doubt knew the end of the story. Could not Mildred look after the flock while he ran down now? No harm could come to the sheep during the little time that he should be gone.

Mildred did not like this plan,—was sure her mother would not like it. Ambrose had better read the story over again, to try and understand it better; and she would go with him to Mr. Yapp’s when the flock was penned, in the evening. Never did the oriental scholar pore more diligently over a new tablet of hieroglyphics than these two children over the fragment of a police report which had fallen in their way. To no

scholar can it be so important to ascertain a doubtful point of history, or to develop facts of the costume and manners of a remote people, as it was to these young creatures to learn the issue of a case in which rights like their own were invaded, and filial sympathies like their own were aggrieved.

Again, during the day, Ambrose called to his sister that he had something to say to her, and Mildred knew that it must relate to the story he had read, so complete was the possession it had taken of his mind. He thought the people round were great fools for not punishing the aggressors on the spot. If he had been there, he would not have waited to hear what the magistrates said; not he. He would have knocked down every one of them that he could get at, if it were by pulling by the leg as the poor boy had done.

“And then,” said Mildred, “they would have served you the same as the boy; and if anybody had taken your part, they would have served him the same. I don’t think that would do any good.”

“Nothing like a battle,” exclaimed Ambrose, waving his cap over his head. “I like a good battle better than all the justices and gentlemen in the world.”

“I don’t like battles,” Mildred observed. “I do not much mind seeing you and Sam Dobbs fight here on the heath, where you only throw one another down, and the grass is too soft to hurt you. But I saw the men fight before the Rose; and one of them lifted the other up high into the air, and dashed him down slap upon the pavement; and you might have heard the knock of his head as far as the pump, I’m sure. There was such a quantity of blood that I could not eat my supper! I should not like to see such a battle often!”

“O, only tell me when anybody does you any harm, and see how I will fight for you.”

“I am sure I shall not tell anything about it, if you go and fight in that manner. I would ask mother or Owen to go with me to Justice Gibson. If you consider, there would be fighting all day long in our place, and much more in L—, if all people chose to battle it out instead of going to the Justice. And besides, I think the Justice can take much better care of this poor little boy than anybody that just fought a battle for him, and then went away.”

Ambrose saw this; and before dinner was over, both the children had learned, after their own fashion, how far superior law is to vengeance, and security to retaliation. Confined as their ideas were (the picture of their own little village and few associates alone being before their eyes), this was a most important notion to have acquired. There needed only the experience of life to enable them to extend their conceptions,—Justice Gibson standing for the magistracy at large, and the little village of Arneside for social life in general.

Evening came. The sheep were penned, and the children were standing before Mr. Yapp’s shop-door, pushing each other on to the feat of asking the grocer for the rest of the story. They saw Mr. Yapp’s eyes turned on them once or twice; but they could

not get courage to make use of the opportunity. It was Mr. Yapp himself who at last brought on the crisis.

“Come, younkers,” said he, “make your way in or make your way off. Don’t stand in my door, preventing people coming in.”

Mildred moved off; Ambrose bolted in; and then his sister came up to reinforce him. As the grocer had nothing very particular to attend to at the moment, he did not crush the aspiration for knowledge. He directed the children to the package of paper from which their fragment had been taken, and looked over the story himself. It would have been too long a task for such poor scholars to seek for what they wanted by reading. To compare the jagged edges of the paper was a much readier method; and Mildred did this, while Mr. Yapp gave her brother some imperfect idea (for he was not learned on the subject) what a Combination was, and why a man was ill-treated for not entering into one. This was worth coming for; but it was all. Mildred’s search was unsuccessful. The rest of the story was irrecoverable. Many customers, some from distant farms and cottages, had been at the shop to-day; and it was impossible to say who had carried it off.

Ambrose begged for his paper back again. There was something on the other side that he wanted to show to Owen.

“Let’s see,” said Mr. Yapp. “Why, this looks like magic,—all these waves, and dashes, and dots, and signs. O, ho! it is short-hand, I see. Somebody advertises to teach short-hand. There, take it to Owen, and see what he makes of it.”

Ambrose turned the paper about, but could see nothing like a hand. What could be meant by short-hand?

A way of writing short, he was told; and he remained as wise as he was before. But now Miss Selina Yapp, who stood smiling behind the counter, was desired to give the children half-a-dozen raisins apiece; and it was quite time to be going home.

Their mother was looking out for them from the door.

“Why, mother, are you going to be out again to-night? Sure the lady must be very bad!”

“I am not going to the lady till morning, dears. ’Tis poor neighbour Johns I am now going to. Sadly sunk he is; and his old woman is nigh worn out. So I’ve made my bit of a bed fit for her here; and it is full time she was in it. So, troop to bed, dears. Get your suppers while ye undress; and be as still as mice, sleeping or waking, when she comes in. Put your learning away till to-morrow, Owen, my boy. Pussy won’t eat your paper before morning, I dare say, if you put it where it will be safe. You’ve had your supper; so now to bed, my boy. You’ll be fresh all the earlier in the morning. But be sure you put on your shoes the last thing, lest you should wake the old woman with your clatter.”

Owen's eye had been completely caught by the mysterious figures of the short-hand specimen. He held it between his teeth while he undressed, and went on looking at it by the twilight, after he was in bed, till his brother and sister had done talking; and then he put it under his bolster. Ambrose, meantime, stuffed his mouth with his supper very indefatigably, and yet managed to get out his story of the little boy who had been beaten for defending his father. Following his mother about wherever she moved, he made her mistress of the whole before he had done.

Mrs. Ede was not disappointed at their saying nothing about her sitting up again to-night. To them, it was so much a matter of course that she should sit up professionally, and to her that she should do what she could for a needy and suffering neighbour, that the circumstance did not seem worthy of remark. All were more occupied with Mildred's disappointment. It was feared that Mr. Ryan was gone from the village this evening, and that he would not come on his rounds again for half-a-year. He had himself bid Mildred look for rags; and now he was gone before she came home! Her bits of blue and white must stand over till he appeared again; for Owen did not think any money would be given for them at the mill. Nurse stayed yet five minutes longer, to comfort her little daughter under this mischance; and within that five minutes, all three were sound asleep.

"Bless their little faces, how pretty they all do look!" thought the mother. "'Tis almost a pity to leave such a pretty sight. I wonder which of them will stand so by me, when I am old and failing like neighbour Johns; if it should please God I should live till then. But, dear me, what a puckered old face mine will be then!—little like their smooth rosy cheeks. 'Tis a cheerless thing for two old folks to be left without children, unfit to take care of one another, like poor neighbour Johns and his dame; and yet worse it would be for me that have laid my husband in his grave so long ago. But if God spares me my little ones, and my girl stays near me, I need not care what else betides. Bless them! how sweetly they do breathe in their sleep! And now, I must go and send the dame to her bed. I trust she will be thoughtful not to wake the children; and I'm sure they will be thoughtful towards her in the morning."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter IV.

SIGNS IN THE SKY.

A few years passed away, and Mrs. Ede was in possession of the blessings she prayed for. Her children were all spared to her, in health, and, by her and their own industry, secured from want. Upon the whole, she had reason to be satisfied with them, though there was a wider difference in their characters and attainments than she could have wished to see. She did not grow restless about what, she supposed, came by nature. She concluded it to be God's will that Owen should be "as sharp as a briar," active in his business, ready about bringing home things pleasant and wonderful to hear, and looked upon by his employer and the village at large as a rising youth who would one day be a credit to his native place. Nurse concluded it to be God's will that Owen should be thus, while his brother and sister were far from being like him. What had made them dull she scarcely knew; unless it was being out so much on the hills without companions, or anything to do but to look after the flock, and knit. They had lost their little learning sadly, and did not now like going to the Sunday-school, as they forgot during the week what they had learned the Sunday before, and became ashamed of growing so tall while they knew so little of what was looked for in a Sunday-school. At home, too, it was a great temptation to nurse to apply to Owen when she wanted to speak about anything that interested her, or to have any little business transacted: he comprehended so much more readily, observed so much more justly, and sympathised so much more warmly than his brother and sister. But nurse was very conscientious about making no differences in her treatment of her children; and she took pains to bring forward the younger ones, continually saying to herself, how very steady Ambrose was, and how thankful she ought to be for a daughter who, like Mildred, made no difficulty of doing whatever she was asked, as soon as she understood what was meant.

Contented as she thought it her duty to be, nurse could not be otherwise than rejoiced when a change took place in the family arrangements, which seemed to open to Ambrose some of the advantages which his brother had enjoyed. Owen had risen from sorting rags in the mill to offices of higher trust, and requiring greater accomplishments than were necessary for the lowest operation of paper-making. He was now made a superior personage in the mill. It was his business to superintend some processes of the manufacture; to give the necessary notice to the exciseman when any paper had to be changed, or to be reweighed by the supervisor before it was sent out for sale; to see that the excise laws were observed as to the lettering of the different rooms, and the numbering of the engines, vats, chests, and presses; to remind his employer when the time approached for purchasing the yearly license; and (fearful responsibility!) to take charge of the labels which were to be pasted upon every ream. Nurse used to call Ambrose to listen, and say how he should like such a charge, when Owen related that if one label should be lost, his employer would be liable to a penalty of 200*l.*; and that, as it was necessary to Mr. Waugh's convenience to

purchase five hundred labels at a time, the destruction of one lot would subject him to be fined 100,000*l*.

Owen rather enjoyed his responsibility; and, with a new sense of dignity, set about his studies in his leisure hours with more zeal than ever.—What was better, he entered with all possible earnestness into his mother's project of getting his brother into the mill before his honest influence with Mr. Waugh was exerted for any other object. Mr. Waugh had not the least objection to make trial of another son of Mrs. Ede's. He had heard that the lad was not over-bright; but he could but try; and if he did not succeed, there were still flocks to be kept on the heath as before. So Ambrose, with a smile on his sunbrowned face, made ready, the next Monday morning, to set forth, with his brother, for the mill.

"If you find it rather close," said his mother to him, "being under a roof from six o'clock to six—"

"But I am to come out for breakfast and dinner, mother."

"I was going to say, you can get a good deal of air in the two hours allowed for meals. And you won't think much of the air on the hills when you have so much company about you. Think of there being thirty men in the mill, and ten women, besides the children! You can never be dull; and you must bring me home the news, as Owen always did.—The dullness will be for Mildred, when she has not you for a companion any longer. I say, Mildred, my dear; you must take care and not lose your tongue."

Mildred did not know that she should have anything to say all day, except calling to the sheep.

"Why, my dear, I have been thinking that you and Ambrose have never made yourselves sociable with other young shepherds, as they used to do in my father's time. There must be plenty, I am sure, from end to end of yonder hills; and why should you keep within such a narrow range as you have kept hitherto? The sheep and you have legs to carry you farther; and you have eyes to keep your flock from mixing with another. Why should not you join company with somebody that may be sitting knitting like you, all alone, and wishing for a chat?"

"There's Maude Hallowell of the next parish, just above the Birchen dale; but that's a long way off," replied Mildred.

"A long way! Well, I wonder what's the use of young limbs, to call the Birchen dale a long way! Try it, my dear; and tell Maude that she should come over to your side in her turn. But she won't see such a sight as you may see, if the day be clear, when you come to the high point of the ridge over Birchen dale. How I once saw the sea glistening, miles off, through a gap of the hills!"

"And the island, mother?"

"Why, no. The island lies off there, they tell me; but it was too far away, I fancy, for me to see it. But, do you try, when you go to look for Maude Hallowell."

The Isle of Man was spoken of with great affection by the people here, as untaxed islands usually are by their neighbours of a taxed country. Many were the little secret privileges enjoyed throughout this district, even as far as the village of Arneside,—privileges of participation in various good things sily brought from the island, in opposition to all the preaching of the winemercants and wholesale grocers of L—, and in Arneside, of the clergyman and Mr. Waugh the paper-maker. All the children attached ideas of mystery to the island, which they perpetually heard mentioned and had never seen; and the getting any nearer to it,—the actually seeing the sea amidst which it lay, was regarded as an approach to the revelation of a great secret. Mildred thought she should like to go and look for Maude.

Nobody had imagined what an event these promotions would prove to the whole family. It brought more new ideas into their minds than all their Sunday schooling had done.

Maude was something of a scholar in her way. She might be found sitting in the heather, her knees up to her chin, and her plaid drawn over her head, poring over a particular sort of pamphlet, which was the only work she was much disposed to read. Her distaff lay on the ground beside her, while she was studying; and when she took it up, she was apt to look into the sky, or far out seawards, instead of minding her spinning. She invariably started when Mildred laid a hand on her shoulder, or shouted on approaching her.

“Why, Maude, what makes your eyes look so big to-day?” asked Mildred, one sultry afternoon, after having led her flock to a place where she might possibly find a scanty shade under a birch.

“My eyes? I’m sure I don’t know,” replied Maude, winking, as if to reduce her eyes to their natural dimensions. “I don’t know what ails my eyes. But I’ve such a thing to tell you! It takes away my breath to think of it.”

“The heat’s enough for that. The hill-breeze has hied away, and it is as hot—Me! I wish the clouds would come up.”

“There will be clouds enough by-and-bye, or water enough at least,—clouds or no clouds,” Maude solemnly averred. “Has your mother told you anything about the comet?”

“No. If it is anything bad, I doubt whether she knows it; for she was merry enough, this morning.”

“Merry enough, I dare say. Not know it! These are not the sort of things your mother does not know, as I heard a person say last night. Do but you ask her about the comet, in a natural way, and see what she will say. No, don’t ask her. Safer not. I’ll tell you.—You see this book. If you will believe me, there is a comet coming up as fast as it can come, and it will raise a flood that will drown—O Mildred, ’tis awful to think of.”

“What will it drown? Not our poor sheep?”

“Our sheep and us too. My dear, the sea will come pouring through that gap, and fill up all below, and leave us no footing on all these hills.”

“Mercy, Maude! I must go and tell my mother; my poor mother!” exclaimed Mildred, starting up from her blossomy seat.

“Your mother will be safe enough,” Maude replied constrainedly.

“Safe! How? Why?”

“Ahem!”

“Now, Maude, do tell me what you mean. Are you sure?”

“Yes, that I am; and you may know when it is coming, by the signs. The book tells the signs; but you must hold your tongue about them, the book says, for fear of bringing on the whole sooner than it need. There will be black storms coming up first, with thunder and lightning. That is to be this summer, while the stars stand in a particular way. I’m going to stay out late to-night, to see how the stars stand. You’ll bide with me, Mildred?”

Mildred shivered as she reminded her companion how far she had to travel home: but Maude insisted that it would be necessary to see how the stars stood, in order to find out afterwards when they began to move on and cross each other. But before the three great stars came together in the sky, a cruel enemy was to rise up against the land, and there were to be some dreadful battles. This revived Mildred’s old terrors about the Turks; and Maude looked more solemn than ever when she heard how many years it was since nurse Ede had expected the Turks. By a natural association of ideas, Maude went on to explain that those who were in the confidence of the unseen powers, and who might be said to have brought on these judgments, would be in no danger. They would be safe amidst the storm they had raised, floating on the surface of the flood like straws; while all others, as far as the flood should extend, would, it was strongly apprehended, be drowned, unless they made use of “the precautions recommended in the supplement to this pamphlet; sold, &c. &c.” Those who were to be preserved would have warning of the approach of the crisis by a tingling in the ancles, while the careless and confident would have another warning given them by a slight, dull pain near the nape of the neck. So, Mildred was to keep watch for any thing her mother might say about her ancles, and to take fright directly if she felt anything about the nape of her own neck.

When she was sufficiently recovered to lay hold of the book, she found that it was a very curious-looking book indeed, with a great number of little moons and stars, and the picture of a wise man, and of a large comet with a fiery tail. She could not but believe now all that Maude had told her.

How they were to get the other information,—about preserving themselves,—was the next question. This book had come over from the island; but not direct into Maude’s hands. It had found its way over the moors from shepherd to shepherd; and no one now seemed to know to whom it belonged, and who might be expected to procure the

supplement. Owen, who had so much to do with paper, and who knew all about printing and books, was certainly the best person to apply to; and Mildred earnestly begged the loan of the pamphlet, that she might show it to him.

“Ah, if I might!” replied Maude: “but William Scott is to have it next; and then Bessy is to show it to her father. I dare not let it go direct to your brother; but when the others have done with it—I’ll quicken them in the reading, and then hide it under yonder big stone. See, here is a dry chink where nobody will think of prying. You may find the book here, early next week. But, for your life, don’t let Owen show it. If he goes and blabs, there is no saying what will become of us all.”

Mildred did not know what worse could befall than, according to the book, must happen at all events; and she thought Owen might as well be trusted as the many people who were already acquainted with the prophecy.

“I wish,” observed Maude, “the book said which quarter the first storms would come up from.” And as she spoke she looked towards the sea.

“Ah, how black it is there!” Mildred anxiously observed. “It is coming up for—for—rain. Don’t you fear so? O Maude, let us be gone! Maude, do, for pity sake, go part of the way home with me.”

Impossible. Maude must make the best of her way to her own home. If Mildred made haste, she might perhaps get to Arneside before the clouds burst. And this affectionate friend hied down the hill as fast as she could, saying she should send one of her brothers to look after the sheep. The companion whom she had terrified to the utmost was left to shift for herself and her flock. The cry of “Maude! O Maude!” followed her far on her way; but she only turned and waved her hand, to advise her friend to make haste homewards.

Mildred’s flock did not seem to have observed the signs of the sky. It was still bright sunshine where they cropped the sweet grass; and they were unwilling to leave their pasture. Mildred had never known them so slow in their obedience; and when, at last, the overcast sky conveyed to them that a storm was coming, they only huddled together, instead of moving on, and began to bleat and frighten one another in a very piteous way. Mildred began to cry a little in her flutter; but probably the sheep did not find it out; for it made no difference in their proceedings. Their mistress was not long in deciding that she must leave them to their own wills, and take care of herself; and a crack of thunder, nearly over head, confirmed her resolution. On she pressed, along the ridge where there seemed to be no more air than in the closest thicket in the dale. She panted with heat so violently that she was compelled to stop, though chased by thunder-clouds, and dreading above all things to encounter the lightning alone. It came in broad sheets of flame, and not a drop of rain yet to put it out; as Mildred would have said. When she reached the point of the ridge from which she must turn into her own valley, she cast one more glance behind her towards her flock. She had never seen the hills look as they did to-day. Their tops were shrouded in darkness; and in the bottom all was nearly as murky as if the sun had long set. The flock might just be seen in a cluster below the mists upon the russet hill-side. At the moment when

Mildred discovered them, the clouds seemed to open, and let out a stream of blue flame upon them. She shrieked; but there was no one to hear her. In another instant, the poor animals were seen scattered far apart; and their mistress believed that she saw one stretched on its side; the only one now on the spot from which they had just fled. She loved every individual sheep of her flock, more or less; but she could not at present tarry to see which she had lost. She scudded on, tossed in mind as to whether she should go home, or stop at some friendly house in the village. Her mother's presence had formerly been her refuge whenever she was frightened; but now she hesitated between a desire to see what nurse said about the storm, and a dread lest she should have had something to do with it. She might have left the point to be settled by circumstances.

It was impossible to walk the whole way with her hands before her eyes. The next time she looked up, she found that the clouds had been too quick for her: the storm was now before her. It seemed gathering about the village, and the grey church looked almost white against the murky back-ground. Another bolt fell,—fell into the midst of the large yew in the churchyard, under which Mrs. Arruther's handsome monument stood, looking almost new with its bright iron rails round it. The tree was riven, as if by magic. Mildred was too far off to hear the crash; and to her it seemed as if the wide-spreading tree had been reached by a finger of fire, at whose touch it fell asunder, and bestrewed the ground in a circle. In horror she turned her back to the spectacle; and the dreadful recollection came into her mind that some people said mysteriously, that her mother had somehow obtained great influence over Mrs. Arruther; and others, that it might have been better for Mrs. Arruther to have seen less of nurse Ede latterly. At this moment, it seemed as if the storm had been sent on a mission to Arneside churchyard; for westward all was again bright; and the sea, which was seldom distinguishable from this point, lay like a golden line on the horizon. Mildred could not but turn again to watch the progress of the storm. On it sped over the hills, giving out as yet no rain. It was a bleak and dreary district which now lay beneath the mass of clouds. A single farm, two miles from Arneside, was the only visible habitation. Once more the lightning came down among the group of buildings; and before it had travelled far, a tinge of smoke rose among the barn roofs, and a red glimmer succeeded, which Mildred considered as kindled by some malicious power which wrought its will through the elements. The rain now pattered heavily on the crown of her head, and she ran, far more swiftly than before, down to the village. Instead of turning to her mother's house, she directed her steps through the village street on her way to the mill. About the middle of it she found Ambrose, standing very quietly with his hands in his pockets, staring at a picture which headed a bill pasted up against a dead wall.

“Look at the fellow! going to fly off from the sail of the windmill, with a flourish of his long tail,” said Ambrose to a companion, as Mildred came up. “I wonder what it means?”

“Why, read what it means, man; where's the use of your learning?” asked the other. “I am sure those big black letters stare one in the face so, they might of themselves almost teach a child to read.”

“O, but I lost my learning while I was a shepherd. Mr. Waugh was right mad with me the other day, because I could make nothing of the directions of the parcels I had to sort out. I have been getting up my reading a bit with Owen this week; but you may as well tell me what that fellow is with the long tail. I shall be an hour making it out for myself.”

“Well, then: ’tis a little rogue of a devil going out to see the world; and—”

“O, Ambrose, the storm!” cried his sister.

“Ay, the tree is down in the churchyard. I have been seeing it; and here is a splinter I brought away. Me! here comes the rain. A fine pepper we are going to have.”

“I hope it will pepper hard enough. Farmer Mason’s barns are on fire. Won’t you go and help?”

“Who told you so?—Which barn?—How did it get on fire?” and many other questions which might wait till the next day, had to be answered before anybody would stir to get the key of the engine house; and then, so many youths ran foul of one another, and differed as to where the key was deposited, and were each bent on being the one to tell the clergyman, that Mildred had given the alarm at the paper-mill before anything effectual was done.

Mr. Waugh and Owen were together in the counting-house, looking at a pamphlet which Mr. Waugh had just put into Owen’s hands.

“That’s the almanack, I do believe,” cried Mildred. “O, I wanted so that you should see that almanack.”

Mr. Waugh explained (Owen being too much absorbed) that this was not an almanack, but a tract which he was lending to Owen. Owen was going to take it home, as he was very eager to read it; but Mr. Waugh feared there would be little in it to amuse any of the family besides. It was not so entertaining, he feared, as an almanack from the island: but he hoped Mildred had nothing to do with those almanacks. It was not safe to have anything to do with them, as they were against the law. It was all very well for the island people to read them if they chose, as they were not against the law there: but here people were liable to be put in prison for them. “Put in prison!” exclaimed Mildred, forgetting for the moment her errand. Yes;—Mr. Waugh knew of twenty-five people who had been sent to gaol by one magistrate, in one month, for selling these illegal almanacks.

“I don’t believe Maude has sold one to anybody,” Mildred thought aloud.

“Well; tell her (whoever she is) that she had better not. People should never sell an almanack till they see that it bears a fifteen penny stamp. The Government makes 27,000*l.* by the almanack-duty; and the Government does not like to be cheated of the duty. It is but a small sum, certainly, to punish so many people for; but let your friend Maude take care of the law. No, no; your brother will tell you this is no almanack;

though it may tell him things nearly as wonderful as he could find in any almanack. Bless me! the people are crying fire!”

“O, I forgot.” And Mildred explained what she came for. The tract was thrust into Owen’s pocket: the population of the mill was turned out to help; and all Arneside was presently on the road to farmer Mason’s.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter V.

OWEN AND X.Y.Z.

From the moment that Owen saw the scrap of short-hand which his brother and sister brought home from the hills, he had taken to the study of the art of short-hand writing. Mr. Waugh had directed him to the clergyman as the person most likely to give him information on the subject, and to show him specimens. The clergyman acknowledged that the short-hand he used was not the best yet invented; and that perhaps the best yet invented might not be nearly so good as some one not yet devised. This was enough for Owen to know, in order to excite him to enterprize. By the help of his friends, he got possession of three or four kinds, made his selection of what he considered the best, and introduced some important improvements. He tried his success whenever he could find an opportunity. Many were the curious conversations in the mill which he took down for his own amusement; and many the sermons which, to his mother's amazement, he read over to her, word for word, on the Sunday evenings, when she had heard them in the mornings. She was fast yielding to the impression that her son Owen was now nearly as wise as the clergyman.

In the tract which Owen thrust into his pocket on the alarm of fire being given, there was an article about short-hand. Mr. Waugh had accidentally met with it at L—, and had brought it home for Owen. When farmer Mason's house and barns were all burnt to the ground, and no more was to be done for him, Owen came back to the counting-house to study this paper. Mr. Waugh could not help being amused at the eagerness with which he devoured the arguments about dashes and dots, as if they had been tidings of peace or war, or of the greatest political event of the age. This was not the first time that Mr. Waugh had had occasion to observe the animation with which scantily-informed persons read what is accordant with their particular tastes and pursuits. He had seen a farm-servant, who happened to be able to read, excited for a whole day about some new way of managing a cow, or the best method of treating a sheep's fleece; and a galloon weaver drinking in the news of the alteration of a farthing a gross in the wages of his manufacture. He had witnessed the effect of such appropriate communications in rousing the sluggish, in soothing the irritable, by turning the course of their thoughts, and in improving the arts of life, by stimulating the powers of the workmen. He had seen none more eager than Owen.

“Sir,” said Owen, “I wonder whether I may ask if you know who this X. Y. Z. is?”

“Not I,” replied Mr. Waugh, smiling. “I only know that I found the article lying on the bookseller's counter; and that when I made a remark upon it, Muggridge told me I might bring it for you. If you have anything to say to X. Y. Z., cannot you say it without knowing who he is?”

“I—say anything to this person! In print! I should like—I am sure, if he knew one thing that I could tell him—But, sir, do you really think they would put in anything of mine, if I sent it?”

“That would much depend on whether they thought it worth putting in. If you have anything to say as good in the eyes of the editor as what X. Y. Z. has said, I suppose the editor will be glad to print it: but I hardly think such a tract as this can pay the writers.”

“I never thought of being paid, sir! Let’s see where this editor is to be found.”

It was soon settled that as Ambrose would have to go to L— in the course of a few days, he might carry a packet from Owen to Muggridge, the bookseller and stationer, who would forward it, at Mr. Waugh’s request, to the editor’s office in London. How absorbed was Owen, from that time, whenever he was not at his business in the mill! How silent at meals! How careful in making his pens! It would be scarcely fair to tell how many copies he made of his letter to X. Y. Z., nor how many beginnings he invented and altered. At last, he had to finish in a great hurry; for the morning was come when Ambrose must proceed to L—, and there was no telling how long it might be before he would have to go again.

“Now, Ambrose, you see this package of No. 2 has to go to Keely and Moss’s.”

“Very well,” said Ambrose, turning it over, as if to fix its dimensions and appearance in his memory.

“You can’t mistake it, for I have printed the direction instead of writing it, that you may have no difficulty. See here! ‘Keely and Moss.’ This little parcel you are to drop by the way, at Mrs. King’s, near the toll-bar. Then, that other great package is for Bristow and Son,—you know where. And then comes Muggridge’s. This, largest of all, is for Muggridge; and pray see Mr. Muggridge himself, and give into his own hands this little brown parcel with Mr. Waugh’s letter outside. What makes you look so puzzled? It is easy enough to carry these to their places, is not it?”

“If I can carry in my head which is which. Let’s see: this big one—”

“Read the directions, and you can’t mistake. Why should you burden your memory when the names are before your eyes?”

Ambrose showed that he could spell out the names, and suggested that, if he should be at a loss, he might ask each person to whom he delivered a package to help him to make out where the next was to go. He would try to be sure to make no mistake about the little parcel and the letter for Mr. Muggridge, and would not come home without a line of acknowledgment from that important personage himself.

Owen was so evidently fidgety during his brother’s absence, that his friend Mr. Waugh thought it right to remind him that his fate did not altogether depend on the parcel being safely delivered. There were so few printed vehicles for what such multitudes of people have to say, that a very great number must be disappointed in

their wish to be heard. He owned that this was very hard; he held that printed speech should be as free as the words of men's mouths, and as copious as it was possible to make it. He had reason to desire this; and he suffered not a little from the arrangements which prevented the possibility of its taking place.

“Because more paper would be wanted then, you mean, sir. I fancy, indeed, we might make a fine business of it; if those troublesome excisemen were out of our way. There is no saying how low you might bring the price of your paper if it were not for them.”

“For them, and for the law which gives them their office. The duty in itself, though the worst part of the grievance, is bad enough,—from thirty to two hundred per cent., and actually lower on the fine paper, used by the few, than on the coarse, which would be used by the many if it were not for the tax. It is the coarse which pays the two hundred per cent., and the fine that pays thirty. It is bad enough that this duty amounts to more than three times the wages of all the workpeople employed in the manufacture.”

“Do you really believe that to be the case, sir?”

“It is pretty clearly made out, I fancy. There are within a few of 800 paper-mills in the kingdom; and about 25,000 individuals employed about the article; and the value of the paper annually produced is between a million and a million and a half. The duty levied on this is about 770,000*l.*;—a most enormous amount. The wages of the workpeople can bear no kind of proportion to it. How much more paper we should make if this burden was removed, so as to allow, as far as it goes, of freedom of printed speech, one may barely imagine; or, if it is beyond our imaginations, there is a person in my mill who can tell us. You know the Frenchwoman there. She will inform you how cheaply her countrymen and countrywomen can have their say through the press. The direct interference of the government with the liberty of the press is, you know, altogether a different question. Setting this aside, there is a wonderful difference in the facilities enjoyed by the French and English for the diffusion of their knowledge and opinions.”

“Then I suppose others besides their paper-makers are better off than we for being without the duty. There must be far more printing to do; and that would occupy, besides the printers, more type-founders and ink-makers; and then booksellers and stationers and binders and engravers; then again, more carpenters and millwrights, and workmen of every kind employed in making the machinery and materials. It must cause a vast difference between that country and this, where we see a want of books on the one hand, and a want of work on the other.”

“Ay; your brother Ambrose and half-a-dozen more, standing by the hour together before a placarded wall, for want of something better to read; and scores of rag-sorters and vat-men applying to me for work which I should be glad to give them if the paper-duty was off. It is really grievous to think how few are employed in the diffusion of knowledge, compared with the numbers who are occupied to much less useful purpose. Look here. This is a list made out upon the best authority. See the

proportion which employments bear to one another here. On the one side—*Literature*; on the other—*what?*

Printers	8342
Paper-makers	4164
Bookbinders	3599
Booksellers	3327
Stationers, (mostly booksellers)	2797
Copper-plate Printers (including calico)	2663
Printsellers	593
	25,485
Publicans	61,231

So, if we exclude the calico-printers, (who do not seem to have much to do with literature) we have not so many as 25,000 persons employed in literature, while we have above 61,000 who sell beer. If we add the gin-shops to the number, what will be the proportion?"

"I find, sir, that in Manchester they have 1000 gin-shops, and not so much as one daily paper."

"It is the fact. And as long as members go into parliament to uphold such a state of things, while they raise an outcry against beer-shops, none such shall have a vote of mine. Which means, that I shall not vote for Mr. Arruther, if there should be an election; as I hear there will be."

Owen thought that gentlemen who upheld the paper-duty in parliament might spare themselves the trouble of canvassing the paper-makers. He understood that Mr Arruther was one who had a terrible dread of the people knowing too much.

"He would scarcely speak to you, Owen, if he knew you were trying to get a letter of your own into print. Well: don't set your mind too much upon it, and I wish you success with all my heart. If we should see this letter of yours next week, I am sure we may trust you not to neglect your business for the sake of becoming a mere scribbler in small publications. I think you will be careful never to take up your pen but when you really have something to say."

Owen was internally much surprised that Mr. Waugh had encouraged him in his enterprize; for no one had a stronger horror than Mr. Waugh of the effect of what he called "low publications" on the minds of his work-people. The whole question lay in what Mr. Waugh considered to be "low publications." If he had meant low in price, it was hardly likely that he would have brought this tract for Owen: but, as few publications then happened to be low in price without being low in principle and spirit, Owen's surprise was natural.

One night of the following week, he came home with a bright countenance; and with a trembling hand, he laid down before his mother, as she sat at work at her table, a

pamphlet, very like the tract she had seen him poring over for so many evenings. He judged rightly that though she could not read, she would like to see the page where O. E. was printed.

Long did she look at those black marks; and now, for the first time, nurse Ede learned two letters of the alphabet. From that day, she never passed the placarded wall in the village without picking out by her eye all the great O-s and E-s in the bills there pasted up. She had now some idea that her son's letter must be altered by being in print. She had heard it very often already, (without understanding much more about it the last time than the first;) but she had now a humble request to proffer,—to hear it again.

“If you are not tired of reading it, my dear boy; and then, when you have done, I think it is not too late for me to put on my bonnet, and go and show it to the clergyman. But I am afraid you will be tired of reading it, my dear?”

There never was a more unfounded apprehension. It was not to be denied that Owen had read it very often; but he did not yet feel himself tired. There was no pretence, however, for his mother's going to the clergyman. Owen had met him; and had made bold to stop him, and show him what had happened.

When all the compliments, hearty, if not altogether enlightened, had been paid; when Ambrose had relaxed in his stare upon his accomplished brother; and nurse had dried her few tears and resumed her needle, and all reasonable hope had been expressed that Mildred would not be long in coming home, the happy young writer began to look forward to the next week, when there would or would not be an answer from X. Y. Z. He had already consulted Mr. Waugh on the probability of there being any answer at all, if there was not next week. Mr. Waugh had little doubt of there being some reply; Owen's remarks being made in an amicable spirit, and very courteously expressed; and if no reply should be ready by the next week, he thought there would at least be a promise of one. Owen counted the days as anxiously as in the times of his childhood, when Christmas-day and the fair-day were in prospect. He would have been much ashamed that even his mother should know how glad he was every night to think that another day was gone; and yet, perhaps, if the truth had been revealed, his mother was little less childish than himself.

The reply appeared, on the earliest possible day; as courteous as Owen's own; not altogether agreeing with him, but modestly asking for further explanation on two or three knotty points.—Who was happier than Owen? His immediate success raised his ambition and his hopes to a height which he had before reached only in imagination. He would write an answer immediately; and when that was done, he would compose a work on short-hand, giving an account of his own studies, and the improvements he believed he had introduced into the art, with all the many ideas which during his studies had gathered round the subject. A stray notion or two about a universal language of written signs had entered his head. He would pursue the idea, and try whether he could not do something which would make him useful out of the limits of his native village. But how was he to find the money to get a book printed? his careful mother asked.—This he believed would be no difficulty: indeed, he hoped he should

make a great deal of money by it. He would show the probability. In trying to do so, he proved something else,—that he had already thought enough on the subject to have made inquiries as to the cost of printing,—had actually seen a printer's bill. He told his mother that the paper for such a pamphlet as he meditated would cost 6*l.*, supposing five hundred copies to be printed. The printing would cost about 14*l.*; not more, for he should take care not to have any alterations to make after it was once gone to press. This would be 20*l.*; and the stitching would cost a few shillings more; and the advertising the same, he supposed. Say, twenty guineas the whole. Then if these five hundred copies sold for half-a-crown a-piece, there would be 62*l.* 10*s.* to come in; above 40*l.* profit,—out of which he would pay the bookseller for his trouble, and there would be a fine sum left over; and he would tell his mother what he would do with it. He would—

She promised that she would hear all he had to say on this head when he should bring Mr. Waugh's assurance that he was likely to gain 40*l.* to divide between himself and the bookseller, by writing a little book. Meantime, she thought it too good a prospect to be a likely one; and could not believe but that everybody would be writing books, if this was the way money might be made by such a lad as her Owen.

Owen thought it a little unreasonable in his mother to doubt him, when he offered her actually a calculation of the expenses he had fully ascertained, and when she had nothing to bring against his figures but an impression of her own. However, he would send his rejoinder to the editor, as before, and think the matter over again before he said anything to Mr. Waugh.

He did so, feeling pretty well satisfied that his second letter, (into which he put some nicely-turned expressions of esteem and admiration for his unknown correspondent) would bring X. Y. Z. and himself to a perfect agreement: and anxious beyond measure for an answer to a query which he proposed in his turn,—a query, upon the reply to which hung he could scarcely say how much that was all-important to the art of short-hand writing. But next week no tract arrived, though it had been positively ordered; and twice over, to prevent mistake. It was so evident that poor Owen was internally fretting and fuming, though outwardly no more than grave, that Mr. Waugh kindly found it necessary to send Ambrose to L—, and even to Muggridge's shop.

“Perhaps, sir,” said the young writer, “you would be kind enough to send one line to Mr. Muggridge; and then he would write an answer, if there should be any accident, instead of sending a message which Ambrose might mistake, not knowing much about book matters.

Ambrose brought back a written answer,—an answer fatal for the time to Owen's hopes. The tract was not to be had this week, nor at any future time. It was suppressed. The publisher had been informed that if he went on to issue it without putting a fourpenny stamp upon it, he would be prosecuted. The publisher could not afford to sell it, if every copy must cost him four-pence in addition to the other necessary expenses; and still less could he afford to be prosecuted. The tract was suppressed.

“Well, well; that is all right enough,” observed Mr. Waugh. “The laws must be obeyed, and I am sure I should have been the last person to bring the publication to Arneside if I had dreamed of its being illegal. I am sorry for you, Owen; but the laws must be obeyed.”

Owen could not bear this; and he went home the first minute he could. His mother was full of concern, and utterly unable to understand how the case stood. She could not help having some hope that the tract would come down, after all, sooner or later; and that Owen would surprise her by bringing it in his hand some day.

No: no hope of such an event! Here was an end of everything. A most useful intercourse between minds which would now become once more strangers was interrupted. The improvement of a useful art was stopped. There was no saying what might not have arisen out of this correspondence,—how much that would have been advantageous to the individuals and to society was now lost through the interference of these Stamp Commissioners. If they had let the publication go on so long, raising hopes and justifying expectations, they might—Owen could not finish what he was saying. He had supposed himself beyond the age of tears; but he now found himself mistaken. He put his hand before his eyes, and wept nearly as heartily as a girl when the spirit of her pet lamb is passing away.

This reverse had the effect of improving Owen’s eloquence. He grew very fond of conversing both with the clergyman and with Mr. Waugh on the impolicy and iniquity of restraining the intercourse of minds in society, for the sake of a few taxes, so paltry in their amount as to seem to crave to be drawn from some material or another of bodily food rather than from the intellectual nourishment which is as much the unbounded inheritance of every one that is born into the world as his personal freedom.

All who knew Owen were surprised at the extraordinary improvement he seemed to have made within a short time, in countenance and manner, as much as in his conversation. It became a common remark among the neighbours, that there must be a proud feeling in nurse Ede’s mind whenever she saw her manly and intelligent-looking son passing through the village, with a gait and a glance so unlike those of his former school-companions, who seemed to have fallen back into a pretty close resemblance to those who had never learned their A, B, C. Some of Owen’s sayings spread, and were admired more than if they had arrived from an unknown distant quarter. When the housewife lighted her evening lamp, her husband told how Owen had said that it was bad enough to tax the light that visits the eyes, but infinitely worse to tax the light that should illumine the immortal mind; and the paper-makers quoted him over their work, saying that no taxation is so injurious as that of the raw material; and that books are the raw material of science and art. For Owen’s sake all were glad, for that of the village all were sorry, when it was made known that Mr. Waugh had resolved to part with his young friend, in order to give him opportunity for further improvement and advancement than could be within his reach at Arneside, and had procured him a good situation in Mr. Muggridge’s establishment at L—.

Nurse spoke not a word in the way of objection. Such an idea as her boy's leaving his native village had never occurred to her; but she bore the surprise and consequent separation very firmly. She happily felt a secret hope that Ambrose would now rise into Owen's place at the mill, and in the society of Arneside; and really, when she saw how he was getting on, in quickness and in the power of reading, she began to believe that it was not yet too late for Ambrose to become a great man.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VI.

PRESS AND POST-OFFICE.

Owen promised, on leaving Arneside, not to forget the old place and his old friends; and though he soon became a prosperous man, he lost none of his interest in those who were proud of being regarded by him. Reports arrived of the importance of the young Arneside scholar in L—; in that large and busy town, which was like London to the imaginations of the villagers. Owen was Secretary to the Mechanics' Institute there, in course of time, after having won two or three prizes, and introduced the study and practice of his favourite short-hand. A straggler from Arneside had met him in the streets of L—; had been with him when he was stopped by three people within a hundred yards, all eager to ask him something about the newspaper,—the *Western Star*; and had finally watched him into the hotel when, well dressed in black, he had passed in with several gentlemen who were attending a public dinner there. Owen must have grown into something very like a gentleman to be attending a public dinner, and to be consulted three times within a hundred yards about a newspaper. One of Owen's tokens of remembrance was this weekly newspaper, a copy of which he sent down regularly to the landlord of the *Rose*, Mr. Chowne, to be circulated through the village when it had been read in the tap-room. This was considered a very handsome present; and, indeed, some of his careful friends, remembering that sevenpence-halfpenny a week is *1l. 12s. 6d.* a year, consulted together about sending him word that he was too generous, and that they were scrupulous about accepting so expensive a remembrance from him. His mother, however, heard of this, and put an end to all scruples by expressing her confidence that her son would do nothing which he could not properly afford; and it afterwards transpired from some quarter that Owen had told somebody that this newspaper cost him nothing, an intimation which certain of the village politicians interpreted as meaning that he wrote the whole of it. From the moment that their version of the story was adopted, the eagerness with which the "*Western Star*" was received was redoubled; and those who could not read listened with open mouths while those who could told the news, and magnified as they went along. The gossip about the Turkish Sultan and his Ministers now became interesting, as well as the speculations about the magnetic pole; and there was no end to the astonishment at Owen's learning, which seemed to extend from courts and cabinets down to razor-strops and Macassar oil. No day of the week passed without his being pronounced a wonderful young man.

The most incomprehensible thing to the whole village was that Owen sent down warnings in his letters, more than once, that the "*Western Star*" must not be trusted as if it told nothing but truth. Its reports were declared to be often unfair, and its politics wavering and unprincipled. There was some talk in L— of trying to get up another newspaper; and it would be a pity if (as was too likely) it could not be done; as an opposition might improve the "*Western Star*." This declaration seemed to exhibit an unparalleled modesty and disinterestedness on the part of Owen. Nobody would have found out that his newspaper was not perfectly fair, if he had not himself said so.

One motive to such transcendent virtue might be discerned. The reports which, Owen said, were the least of all to be trusted, were those of Mr. Arruther's speeches and conduct in the House. Owen was known to be no admirer of Mr. Arruther as a Member of Parliament; and, that the "Western Star" had always praised this gentleman, and called upon his constituents for gratitude, was supposed to be owing to the laws of good breeding, which might forbid any public blame of so rich and grand a person as Mr. Arruther. But Owen's private letters spoke very plainly of the Member; of his idleness about his duty; of his prejudice in favour of the aristocracy; and of his constancy in opposing every measure which could tend to the relief and enlightenment of the working classes. He wished that he could give his old friends the means of knowing what grounds he had for saying all this; but the London papers took little notice of Mr. Arruther, and nothing would be found against him in the "Western Star." He must beg any of the Arneside people who had votes to try to ascertain how Mr. Arruther had voted on such and such questions, and make up their minds for themselves whether they were properly represented.

On the days when the "Western Star" arrived, man after man dropped in at the tap-room at the Rose, to try for his turn, or to listen to any one who might be reading aloud. Nurse would never be persuaded to go and listen too, though a seat of honour would have been awarded her, by the window in summer, and near the fire in winter. She felt that she had rather wait; and a rule was made that she should have the first loan of the paper. Such was the rule, if it had but been kept. But when she had her proper turn, it did not always happen that Ambrose was ready to read, or that she was at home that evening; and she never chose to detain the treasure beyond a single day, when so many better scholars than herself were longing for it. And there was some underhand work about this matter. The newspaper had sometimes disappeared from the table at the Rose; which happened because some impatient person had bribed the pot-boy to let him or her have it first, or had slipped in through the open door, and carried it off: and then, by the time it came round to nurse's cottage, it was so thumbed and dirtied and torn at all the creases, that poor scholars read it at a great disadvantage; so that, altogether, Nurse was not much enlightened by the "Western Star." Yet, the first thing that she remembered on waking, every Saturday morning, was that this was the day of the arrival of the newspaper; and Ambrose was sure to be reminded of it by some gentle hint during breakfast.

He went in at the Rose, one Saturday evening, to see what was doing. There sat Farmer Mason, looking more shabby than ever; as he had done each time that Ambrose had seen him since the fire. He came to learn if the advertisement and list of subscriptions in his favour were in the "Star" to-day. Nothing like them appeared; and he was drowning his disappointment in a third glass of spirit and water. Some Job's comforters were present who asked him how he could expect that his friends should consume the little money they had obtained for him in advertising; and added what they had heard about the unwillingness of many people to assist a man who had shown himself so imprudent as not to insure. Mason did not boast of any more patience than Job.

"As for the insuring," said he, "it is all very well for the rich to talk. They insure themselves; having several properties which they make to secure one another; it being

the last thing likely that all or many should be burnt down. But the very cause which prevents their insuring should teach them to excuse us poor men for not doing it.”

“Besides,” observed the landlord, “there are so many country people that do not think of insuring against fire! Indeed, I scarcely know a farmer that has done it; and why should Mason act differently from his neighbours?”

“And why don’t the farmers insure? Why does not every body insure?” cried Mason. “Because of the tax which the rich escape paying by making one estate insure another. As long as the government is to have 200 per cent. upon fire insurances, there will be plenty of people to keep me in countenance for what some few are pleased to call my neglect.”

“What business has the government to interfere with a man, when he is trying to provide against misfortune?” asked the shoemaker of the village. “It is a direct reward to carelessness to tax carefulness. And 200 per cent. too!”

“Yes: 200 per cent. If the premium is calculated at 1*s.* 6*d.*, the government imposes a 3*s.* stamp. If you go and insure 1000*l.* worth of goods at 15*s.*, we’ll say, you must pay a duty of 30*s.* to government. Where is the wonder that a man would rather trust to Providence to keep the fire from his roof than submit to such a tax? The true matter of wonder is, that any government could ever shut its eyes to this!”

“Something has happened about sea-insurances which might have opened their eyes, as I know from my brother, who is now master of a ship from the next port,” observed the landlord. “The last time he was here, he told me what I had no idea of before. While we have more and more ships passing in and out, the duty on sea-policies is falling off. Where the business transacted has increased one-fifth, the duty has fallen off two-fifths: that is to say, our merchants and ship-masters go and insure in Holland, and in Germany, and in the United States of America, or any respectable place where the stamp is not so high as in England. The government might as well take off this tax at once, with a good grace; for, in a little while, all the insurers will be driven across the water. Since the duty will soon yield nothing at all, they may as well let us keep a useful branch of business among us, instead of giving it away to foreigners.”

“I am sure,” said poor Mason, sipping from his glass, and recurring to the faults which had been found with him,—“I am sure it is no unreasonable thing of me to look for another advertisement or two, considering how little can be done by one. Only think how many people may chance to miss seeing the paper that once, or may overlook that particular advertisement, when they might be ready enough to give, if it did but come often enough before their eyes. And I suppose it cannot cost a great deal to print ten or twelve lines; and when once it stands ready for printing, I suppose they charge less each time, as is done in other cases where there is less charged in proportion to the greatness of the custom.”

The landlord knew that this was the way in America. His brother was in the habit of advertising the departure of his ship from an American port. He paid for his advertisement (which happened to be a short one) 2*s.* 2*d.* for one insertion; 3*s.* 3*d.* for

two; and only $6\frac{1}{2}d.$ more each time, for as long as he chose. An advertisement of eight lines, which would have cost him two guineas in England at the end of a week, cost him in America only $5s. 5d.$ It is the advertisement duty which makes an advertisement as expensive the twentieth time as the first in England; and, bad as the duty is altogether, this is the worst part of it; for, as Mr. Mason was saying, repetition is all in all in advertising.

“There is talk of taking off a good part of the advertisement duty,”* observed the shoemaker.

“There will be less use in taking off a part than the government expects,” replied the landlord, “for the very reason that the principle of an advertisement duty interferes with the lowering of the price on repetition. If the government now make, as they say, $160,000l.$ a year by this tax, they would find their profit in taking it off altogether by—”

“The increase of the paper duty, from the multitude of advertisements there would be.”

“That would be true; but I would have the paper duty off too; and so I should look to another quarter for the compensation. Much more than $160,000l.$ a year would drop into the treasury from the increase of traffic of every kind which must happen in consequence of freedom of advertising. Our greater traffic of late years has not yielded more advertisement duty. We had better try now whether giving up that duty would not cause greater traffic, and so an increase of duties upon other things.”

“One might easily find out,” observed somebody, “whether the Americans advertise more than we do, from having no duty to pay. That would be the test.”

“The only test; and what is the fact? There are half as many again of advertisements in the daily papers of New York alone, as in all the newspapers of Great Britain and Ireland.”

“Without London. You leave out the great London papers.”

“Not I. I include the great daily papers of London. We have twice as many people as the United States, and more than twice as much business; yet we have only one million of advertisements in a year, and the United States have ten millions—that is to say, their advertising is to ours as ten to one. And when you further consider, as my brother says, how many of the Americans are busy on the land instead of in trade, and how many more we have occupied in trade, from which the greater part of advertisements come, it is hardly too much to say that their advertising is to ours as forty to one. Depend upon it, we are under the mark when we say that the duty suppresses nineteen out of twenty of those advertisements which would be sent to the newspapers if we had the same freedom as the Americans; and that no mere reduction will prevent the suppression of millions which it is for everybody’s advantage should appear.”

“Yes, indeed; and why we should be compelled to pay to the Government for making known that we have something to sell ten miles off, when a shopkeeper may freely put a bill in his window to tell what may be had within, it is not altogether easy to see.”

“There is one thing easy to see,” observed Joy, the builder; “and that is the figure that people make of our walls, sticking them all over with bills. I have more trouble than enough with pulling them down from the end of my master’s house; and as sure as I next pass that way, I find it all covered over again with red and black letters, and ugly pictures. My master calls it making a newspaper of his gable. And as for the chalking,—it is said that men and boys are hired to go about chalking all the walls in the country; and before ever our mortar is dry, there is some unsightly scrawl or another on the new red bricks. ’Tis too much for the temper of any builder. For my part, I make no scruple of threshing any one that I catch with the chalk in his hand, man or boy.”

Ambrose stood up for the practice of plastering the walls with bills; he having been often amused, and even led to read, by a tempting display of this kind. But it did not take long to convince him that he might be better amused, and more comfortably advanced in his reading, if he could but be supplied at his own home with a sufficiency of pictures and articles to study. He saw that it was pleasanter to sit down at his mother’s deal-table for such purposes, than to stand in a broiling sun or drizzling rain, looking up till the back of his neck ached like that of a rheumatic old man.

Mason was at first equally disposed to advocate the chalking. He had himself sent his poor boys about to represent on every conspicuous brick surface within five miles, a large house in flames, with the inscription underneath, “Remember Farmer Mason and his large young family, burnt out of house and home.” He believed that he owed nearly as much to this as to having employed Grice the crier to bawl his case through two or three parishes.

The shoemaker hoped that fellow Grice did not take anything from Farmer Mason for doing him this service. Grice was known to be prospering in the world; and it was a cruel thing to take money from a ruined man, the same as from a fortunate one. Mason signed, shook his head, and applied himself to his glass. Perhaps the landlord winced under the last remark, conscious of being now actually running up a score against Mason for drink, which he would never have thought of tasting if he had not been tempted to the Rose, for the sake of seeing the advertisement of his calamity. To have defended Grice would have been going rather too far; but Chowne ventured to show that Grice was no worse than some other people.

The Government, he said, took large sums of money from all distressed people whose calamities are advertised. When there was a famine in Ireland, several thousand pounds of the money subscribed for the relief of the famishing went to the Government in the shape of advertisement-duty; and when the floods of the last autumn had laid waste whole districts in Scotland, the profit which the Treasury made by the announcement would have rebuilt hundreds of the cottages which were swept

away. And this profiting was not only on rare and great occasions. There was not a poor servant out of place who had not to pay to the Government for the chance of getting a service; and to pay exactly the same as the nobleman who wishes to sell an estate of ten thousand a-year, and to whom a pound spent in advertisement-duty is of less consequence than a doit would be to the servant out of place.

Mason sighed, and said that the thing most plain to him was that he was destined to be stripped of all he had, since there was a pluck on every hand,—first the fire, and then Grice, and the Government, and everybody. But though he was disappointed in what he came to see in the newspaper, he did not mean to go away without seeing it; and so he would trouble the landlord for another glass of spirit and water. It would be hard if he did not see the paper now, as he had no money to pay the pot-boy, like some people, for a sight of it. He did wonder, and he was not the only one that wondered, that the landlord chose to make a profit of what was sent him as a present,—taking one little advantage from one, and another from another; for nobody supposed the pot-boy put in his own pocket all the good things he got every week.

Chowne wondered what his friend Mason meant. If people chose to make presents to his servants, it was nothing to him: but,—as for his making anything by the paper,—he could tell the present company, if they did not know it already, that there was a law against letting newspapers. He should now take care to tell his pot-boy the very words of the law,—“that any hawker of newspapers, who shall let any newspaper to hire to any person, or to different persons, shall forfeit the sum of five pounds for each offence.” If, after this, the lad should choose to run the risk, it would be at his own peril; and nobody would now suppose that a prudent man like himself would run the risk of being fined five pounds, a dozen times over, every week.

O, but that must be an old, forgotten law, that nobody thought of regarding. Were there no newsmen in London, letting out newspapers at twopence an hour?

The law was not so very old, Chowne said. Our good King George the Third had been reigning just thirty years when it was passed. If it was disregarded in London, he supposed people had their reasons for disregarding it; and he was far from wishing to defend that bit of law; but, for his own sake, he should not break it. So, perhaps, friend Hartley, who had been getting the paper by heart, apparently, while the others were talking, would have the goodness either to read aloud, or to hand the sheet over to somebody who would.

The reader had been anxious to see what was said about Arruther’s being absent during two nights,—the most important of any in the session to some of his constituents,—and voting with the majority on another question, after having led people to suppose he was of an opposite opinion. But this paper was really ridiculous in its support of that man. Here were a hundred reasons for his doing as he had done; and not one good one. Hartley had no idea of being gulled as this paper would gull him, just for the sake of whitewashing Mr. Arruther; and he began to read what the paper said. A good deal of argumentation followed, which, however animating and wholesome it might be to the persons engaged, was dull and useless to Ambrose, from his knowing nothing about the subject discussed. Seeing no chance of the party

arriving at the accident and murder parts in any decent time, he determined to go home and tell his mother that they must wait, and that he did not know whether the paper was entertaining or not, this time. All were too busy leaning over the table and listening, to take any notice of him when he went away; and, as he never drank anything, Chowne did not consider himself called upon to bestow more than a slight nod on Ambrose, as the lad made his rustic bow in passing out.

Whom should he meet at the next corner but Ryan? Ambrose's wits were certainly brightened by some means or another; for he bethought himself of the use Ryan might be of to poor Mason, by serving as a walking advertisement of his misfortune. The moment he had heard that the rag-merchant was going to offer his company and his news to old Jeffery to-night, instead of always troubling nurse Ede to entertain him, Ambrose blurted out the story of the fire, the subscription, the rapacity of the Government in regard to advertisements, and the advantage it would be to Mason if the rag-merchant would take up his cause, and beg for him through the country.

"Ay; that's the way," said Ryan. "Always something for me to do as I travel the country! However, I'll do it with all my heart. My errands are not all begging ones, as I will show you. I give as well as beg sometimes. Here, take this. This is Owen's tract (I mean the tract that was put down) come to life again. I'll give it to you this once; and if you can get anybody to join you in buying it at twopence a-week by the time I come again, I can order it for you. Not that you can have it weekly: the carriage would cost too much; but—"

"It can come by post, can't it? The 'Western Star' always comes by post, and no charge."

"Very likely; but this is not altogether like the 'Western Star' or other newspapers that come by post, as you will find when you look at it. But you can have four numbers together, once a-month, when the monthly things come for the clergyman and Mr. Waugh. Give my love to nurse, and tell her rags are down. She must take a penny a pound less if she has any to sell. The rags from the Mediterranean and the east are not all wanted, and the American paper-makers have come here to buy; and while that is the case, mine will be but a bad business. Our paper-making is a joke to theirs; and, for my part, if something does not happen soon to quicken the demand for rags, I think I shall give up going my rounds, and bid you all good bye."

"No: don't say that, Mr. Ryan. We should be sorry not to see you twice a-year, as we have done as long as I can remember."

"Well; if you wish to help my trade, and so go on seeing me, do your best to spread this publication. If you will believe me, there are ten thousand a-week circulating of it already; and that requires a good deal of paper,—see!"

Ambrose was approaching, as slowly as he could put one foot before the other, the fifth time that his mother looked out for him from her door.

“So, here you are, my dear; and the paper, too!—and a picture at top of it to-day! That’s something new. I wonder whether it be Owen’s drawing. He could draw if he was to try, I’m sure.”

“ ’Tis not Owen’s paper, mother; but a much finer one, and not costing scarcely a quarter as much as Owen’s.”

And he told how he had got it; and helped his mother to make out the pictures, as she looked at them over his shoulder.

“Who is that lady, I wonder now,” said nurse, “with her hands fastened, poor thing! and a great arm out of a cloud whipping her? What fine feathers she has in her queer hat! and what a whip! with a man’s face at the end of every cord.”

“That is Britannia and her task-masters, mother. Those are her task-masters,—those faces in the whip; and they are our rulers: there are their names. And below there is—‘Many a tear of blood has Britain shed under those tyrants that make themselves a cat-o’-nine-tails, to bare the bones and harrow the feelings of the sons of industry.’ How cruel!—Then there is—here, in this corner—”

“A great chest all on fire. I see.”

“A printing-press, that is; but what the great light round about it means, I don’t know; but it does not seem to be burning away. Then, opposite, there is a black person, with an odd foot and a long tail; and see what is flying off from the end of his tail!”

“A crown, I do believe; and what is the other?”

“A mitre. The lines below are—

‘My tail shall toss both Church and State,
And leave them, shortly, to their fate.’

And do look behind! There is the church window, and two men hanging. I think the fat one is the parson. Who can the other be?”

“But, my dear, I do not like this picture at all. It seems to me very cruel and wicked.”

“Well, let us look at the next. Here is a man that has tumbled into the kennel; and a woman with a child in her arms falling over him; and nobody helps them up; but all the boys in the street are pointing at them. What is written over behind there? ‘Gin palace.’ Ah! those people are drunk, poor creatures!”

“My dear, don’t say ‘poor creatures!’ for fear I should think you pity them. They deserve all that may happen to them; and I hope the paper says so.”

The paper said something very like it. It told the story of a man who had beaten his wife, and turned her out of a gin-shop when she had followed him there, with her infant in her arms. In his drunken rage, he had pushed the door so violently as to

squeeze the infant in the door-way, and cause its death. This was related very plainly, and followed by some forcible remarks on the disgusting sin of drunkenness. Mrs. Ede was much pleased with all this, and with more which Ambrose read when she had lighted her candle, and sat down to darn his stockings. There was a story of a master who was kind enough to offer to make another trial of a run-away apprentice; and the rebuke which a magistrate gave to a mean-spirited wretch who would have frightened his little daughter into telling a lie to save him from justice. Then came a short account of what was doing at the North Pole; and afterwards, directions how to keep meat from spoiling in hot weather. In the midst of this, Ambrose stopped, quite tired out. When he came to "wiped with a dry cloth," his breath failed him, and the lines swam before his eyes. He had never before read so much in one day. Nurse was sorry not to hear what should be done next with the meat; but she hoped Ambrose would be able to go on to-morrow. Meantime, she spent a few minutes in glancing over what was to her an expanse of hieroglyphics.

"Ah! here is a song!" cried she. "This is the way the song was printed in Owen's paper.—Never mind, my dear. You have done quite enough. Never mind the song now."

Ambrose could not help trying, and for some time in vain, to make out this bit of apparent poetry. It turned out at last to be a list of country agents and their abodes: a list so long as to fill a quarter of a column.—When the laugh at this mistake was done, nurse began to tell her son what a very happy mother she considered herself. It was a pity, to be sure, that poor Mildred did not get home in time to hear all that her mother had heard; and, indeed, nurse sometimes wondered whether her girl did not stay out later than she need; and whether it was a fancy of her own that Mildred was not so fond of being at home as she used to be. But still, everybody knew Mildred to be a very steady, virtuous girl, unlike two or three at the mill who might be mentioned; and, while many mothers were anxious about their lads, not knowing whether they passed their evenings at the public-house, or playing thimblery in the lane, or going into the woods after dark with a gun, nurse was wholly at ease about her boys. Owen was doing honourably, which partly made up for his being at a distance; and here was Ambrose improving his learning by finding out for her how meat should be kept in hot weather, and meeting with awful lessons about drunkenness. It made her feel so obliged to him! and she knew he had a pleasure in delighting her: a sort of pleasure that poor Mrs. Arruther and her son seemed never to have had together, for all his fine education. And there were many much humbler people than the Arruthers who were not near so happy as nurse. If she could but make out whether anything heavy lay on her girl's mind—But the present was not a time to speak of the only great trouble she had. It would be ungrateful to do so to-night.—There was one more thing she should like to know, however; and that was why, when this paper blamed violence and falsehood in men that got drunk, and in bad fathers, it was itself so violent about our rulers, and told so much that she thought must be false about them. She had no wish to find fault with anything that Ryan had brought; but she had rather think the paper mistaken than believe that our rulers were so cruel as it declared.

Ambrose looked again at the pictures; thought the people who wrote the paper must be pretty sure what they were about before they printed such things; feared that the

rulers and the church must be a bad set; and reminded his mother how virtuous this publication had proved itself about gin.

If nurse had known all, she would not have felt the surprise she had ventured to express; and if Ambrose had known all, he would not have concluded that because some vices were condemned and some virtues honoured in one page, the next must be pure in the morals of its politics. This newspaper was an unstamped, and therefore an illegal, publication. It was obnoxious to the law, and therefore an enemy to the law, and to all law-makers. Moral in its choice and presentation of police reports, and of late occurrences of other kinds, judicious in its selections from good books, and useful in those of its original articles which had nothing to do with politics, it was cruel, malicious, and false in its manner of treating whatever related to law-makers. It was what in high places is called inflammatory. Its tendency was, not to enlighten its readers about the faults of their representatives, errors in the practice of government, and the evils arising from former faults and errors; but to persuade the people that rich men must be wicked men; that the industrious must be oppressed; and that the way to remedy every thing was to strip the rich and hang the idle. Its object, in short, was to make its readers hate an authority which it chose to disobey.—If no injurious authority had interfered with the establishment of this paper, (which establishment it had not availed to prevent,) the political part of this paper would have been as moral as the rest. There is no abstract and peculiar hatred in men's minds against rulers, any more than there is against poets, or jewellers, or colonels in the army, or any other class; and no one class would have been selected for reprobation here, if there had been no provocation, on the one side, to defiance on the other. If there had been no fear of punishment for saying anything at all, there would have been no temptation to say what was unjust and cruel, to the injury of every party concerned. But, for the sake of the four-penny stamp, a temperate and very useful publication had been put down; and there had arisen from its ruins,—another, not like itself, but seasoned high with whatever could most exalt the passions, and thereby enlist the prejudices of the multitude in its support against the law. This could have taken place only under an unwise and oppressive law; unwise in affording facilities for its own evasion; and oppressive in debarring the people from an immeasurable advantage, for the sake of a very small supposed profit to the treasury.

As Ambrose unfolded the paper, on being satisfied with what he had seen of two sides of it, two or three little papers fell out, and fluttered down to the ground. They contained a puff of the paper, and were to be circulated by him, no doubt.

“The best and cheapest Newspaper ever published in England.

“the twopenny treat, and people's law-book.

“It shall abound in Police intelligence, in Murders, Rapes, Suicides, Burnings, Maimings, Theatricals, Races, Pugilism, and all manner of ‘moving accidents by flood and field.’ In short, it will be stuffed with every sort of devilment that will make it sell. For this reason, and to make it the poor man's treat, the price is only twopence (not much more than the price of the paper.) So that even to pay its way, the sale must be enormous. With this, however, we shall be satisfied. Our object is, not to make

money, but to beat the Government. Let the public only assist us in this, and we promise them the cheapest and best paper for the money that was ever published in England.

OBSERVE!	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Advertisements under six lines	1	6
Each additional line	0	2

Published by E. Hamilton; and sold by all courageous Venders of the unstamped.”

Why did not Ambrose read this announcement to his mother? Why did he not, the next day, give her some of the benefit of the other two pages of this paper? If nurse had been able to read for herself about the “devilment” with which the publication was to be stuffed, and about the nature of the contract between masters and workmen, she might, by a few words of parental wisdom and love, have saved her son and herself from future intolerable misery. One grief lay heavy at her heart already; a grief which had its cause in the gross ignorance of one of her children. Another was in store, arising from the imperfect knowledge and mistaken credulity of her second son. In the enlightenment of the eldest lay her only security for her maternal peace.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VII.

THE POLICY OF MPs.

Owen's visions had not all been realized. He had not yet got his thirty or forty pounds by publishing what he had to say on short-hand and universal language. He had not even published at all. This arose, first, from certain difficulties represented to him by Mr. Muggridge, and fully confirmed by a London bookseller; and, next, from his having grown modest as he grew enlightened. He was much less confident at L — than he had been at Arneside, that he could say anything very new and very valuable on a universal language.

The bookseller's first difficulty was about Owen's remarks being published as a pamphlet. He was right enough in saying that the young man did not know what he was about in wishing to publish a pamphlet. In order to intimate the risk, Mr. Muggridge told him that not one pamphlet in fifty pays the cost of its publication; and showed him how clearly impossible it was that any other result could take place. Pamphlets were triple taxed; and by what means could so small an article pay its expense of production, three kinds of tax, and the trouble of the publisher, and leave any surplus for the author? First, the paper was heavily excised; then there was the pamphlet duty of three shillings per sheet; and then the advertisement duty. And the risk of not selling the whole must not be forgotten. The duty must be paid upon every copy of the largest edition, before a single one was sold; and if no more than twenty were purchased, and all the rest went as waste paper to the tobacconist, there would be no drawback allowed: not even time given to see whether there would be any sale or not. There were no bonded warehouses, where books might be lodged between their manufacture and their sale. To issue a pamphlet must be a speculation of unavoidable hazard—

To all but the Government, who makes sure of the taxes beforehand.

To all but the Government! And what did the Government get by it? The practice tended to the suppression of pamphlets, and not to the profit of the treasury. The very oppressive pamphlet duty yielded to the Government 970*l.* a-year. For this mighty sum were hundreds of intelligent men kept silent who might have uttered thousands of opinions and millions of facts which would have been useful to their race, but who had neither power nor inclination to issue in expensive volumes thoughts which would have been worth setting forth in cheap tracts. For this mighty sum were thousands of rational beings subjected to that restriction of commerce which is the most to be deprecated, and the least capable of defence,—the commerce of thought. What would be said to regulations of commerce which should practically prohibit a silver coinage, while it allowed but a very minute supply of copper? What would be thought of the injury to those who had it not in their power to deal with gold? Yet in the far more important interchange of knowledge and opinion, this monstrous virtual prohibition subsisted for the sake of the 970*l.* a-year which it brought to the treasury!

Owen could scarcely believe that the produce of the tax could be so small till it was explained what its attendant expenses were. Fifty prosecutions in the year cannot be conducted for nothing; and the average of prosecutions in a year for the neglect of payment of the pamphlet duty was fifty. In some years, the average of prosecutions had been so much larger, or the horror of the tax had so availed in deterring from that mode of publication, that the Government had sustained an actual loss of 200*l.* under that head of duty. If Owen meant to publish at all, he had better swell his matter into a good thick volume—a ten shilling octavo, which would escape the pamphlet duty, and cost no more in advertising than an eighteen-penny pamphlet.

And what chance was there of his making it worth his while to publish a book? Owen would know. Little chance enough of his being recompensed for his toil, and rewarded for his talent; though he might perhaps recover the money he must lay out. If he printed five hundred copies, the expenses would be about 170*l.*, of which 30*l.* would be tax of one kind or another. Then eleven copies must be given to various institutions—

But Owen did not mean to give any away, except two or three copies to old friends.

He must. There was a law by which eleven copies of every work entered at Stationers' Hall must be presented to institutions where they are as sure to lie unread as if they were already the waste paper they will be some time or other. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge are among the eleven favoured places: those rich Universities, which are exempted from that paper-duty which must be paid by every little tradesman who issues a hand-bill about his stock, and every labourer who buys his daughter a Bible when she goes out to service, or puts half a quire of foolscap into her hand that she may write sometimes to her parents. Well; these expenses being all paid, there would remain to be divided between the author and the publisher, when every copy was sold, neither more nor less than 20*l.* That is to say, the treasury would take 35*l.*, and the author and publisher together 20*l.*, and this in the best possible case,—that of every copy being sold.

This statement disposed Owen to refrain from becoming an author at present,—at least till he had asked an experienced London publisher whether Mr. Muggridge did not labour under some mistake. The answer from London was that Mr. Muggridge's statement was perfectly correct; and added that, in this country, not one-fourth of the books published pay their expenses, leaving out of view all recompense of the author's ability and industry; that only one in eight or ten can be reprinted with advantage; and that, in the case of the most successful works,—works of which the very largest number is printed and sold,—the duties invariably amount to more than the entire remuneration of the author.

From this moment Owen applied himself to make some other use of his short-hand than publishing it. He became the principal reporter for the "Western Star."

Now a power came into his hands of whose nature and extent he had not formed any conception before he made trial of his new occupation. Upon him it now depended how much the good people of L— and a wide district round should know of the law

proceedings, of the public meetings and dinner speechifyings that took place in the town and neighbourhood. Upon Owen it depended whether the misdemeanours of certain citizens should be held up as a warning, or obligingly concealed; whether the corporation should be allowed to take its own way in quiet, or subjected to be watched by the townspeople; whether one side or both of a political question should be presented. There was no competition, as the “Western Star” was the only newspaper in the place; and nothing could be easier than it now would have been to Owen to influence the opinions of the whole reading public in L— as to all matters of general concern, by his own. Nothing could be easier than to give his own view of any question discussed at a public meeting. It was only laying down his pencil, and folding his arms till a speaker had done, and then making a note of his first and last sentence; while the best speakers on the other side had their best sayings put at length, and to the best advantage. As it was impossible to issue the whole of what every body said, the most natural process seemed to be to print what Owen liked most, and must therefore think the most worth carrying away. Owen himself felt that this was an unreasonable and pernicious power to be in the hands of any man; and, earnestly as he desired not to abuse it, he was so well aware that every man must have his peculiar tastes and political partialities,—he saw so clearly that no one report of his in the “Western Star” was in matter precisely what it would have been if prepared by any one else, that it offended his judgment and his conscience to be left in a state of irresponsibility in the discharge of a duty of such extreme importance. He felt that responsibility to any one mind was out of the question. If Mr. Muggridge, or any other censor, had been set over him, the only difference would have been that the public would have seen affairs through Mr. Muggridge’s medium, instead of through Owen’s: but there was another kind of responsibility to which he would fain have been subjected; and that was, public opinion. If he had known that other papers beside the “Western Star” would also publish the proceedings he was reporting, he must not only have avoided any gross act of suppression or embellishment, but must have vied with other reporters in selecting whatever was most weighty, by whomsoever said, and on whatever aspect of a question. In free competition alone, he saw, lay his security for his own perfect honesty, and that of the public for being truly informed about public proceedings.

Owen was now in a somewhat similar position to that of the reporters of the London newspapers, some years ago, when a very few journals, compromising matters among themselves, and, secure from competition, sported with public curiosity as they chose. If a fit of yawning seized those gentlemen in the midst of a parliamentary debate, they went to the next tavern to refresh themselves with a bowl of punch; and Burke and Fox might take their chance for its being known beyond the House that they had spoken at all. Thus, if Owen grew tired, he had only to go away, and add next morning that “the meeting separated at a late hour, highly gratified,” &c. &c. Again, the old London reporters did not like having to work three nights together, and gave themselves a holiday on Wednesdays. In like manner, Friday being a busy day with Owen, he might have skipped over all Friday doings, and have allowed a dead silence to rest on whatever happened on that unlucky day. He had been rather roughly treated by one of the opulent friends of the Mechanics’ Institution; and, if he had not been too honest, he might have omitted a hundred notices which he printed of this gentleman’s zealous exertions for the good of the town; or have made nonsense of the sentiments

he uttered, or have taken care that his name should not remain upon record in the local history of which reporters are the faithful or unfaithful compilers. This is the way that Mr. Windham's light was hid under a bushel for a whole session, when he was most conscious of his own brilliancy, and most eager to illumine the public. He had offended the reporters; and to punish him, the people of Great Britain were kept in the dark.

Besides the temptation which he had in common with them,—that of suppressing through pique and prejudice,—Owen was subjected to another. Again and again was he insulted by the offer of a bribe, or by an attempt at intimidation. One day, when he had been reporting in court, Mr. Arruther crossed over to him, and with a dubious manner, between shyness and condescension, asked him to drop in and take a glass of wine with him at his inn, that evening, as he had something to say to him.

Owen had never used any disguise as to his opinions of Mr. Arruther's parliamentary conduct; and he therefore believed that if the gentleman bestowed any thoughts on him at all, they could scarcely be very affectionate ones. He was surprised, of course, at finding himself received with as much cordiality as a person of little sensibility could throw into his manner. The wine on the table was excellent; the invitations to partake of it hearty; and the object of the invitation presently disclosed.

Mr. Arruther could not conceive why Owen troubled himself to report all the law proceedings that took place in the court. Many of them could interest none but the parties concerned. What had the public to do, for instance, with his cousin Ellen's quarrels with him about his mother's property? Where was the use of printing law-suits,—dull things to read, as they were tiresome to manage? Owen explained that his business was to report. It was the affair of the readers of the paper what they would skip as dull, and what they chose to consider indispensable. He understood from his employer that no part of the paper was more narrowly watched than the law reports; and this was not surprising, as it was by means of these law reports alone that a great number of persons could gain accurate information respecting the laws to which they were subject. If he were obliged to regard the representations made to him as to what should be left out of the paper, there would soon be nothing left in it: for there were few kinds of intelligence that it was not the wish of some person or another to conceal: but, if he had to choose what particular department should be omitted, it should certainly be almost any rather than the law-reports. Other kinds of information had some chance of travelling round by some different means; but the newspapers were almost the only guides of the subjects of the State as to their duty to the State. He knew that Mr. Arruther was of opinion that the people had nothing to do with the laws but to obey them; but people could not well obey the laws without knowing what they were: so that Mr. Arruther, who wished the laws to be obeyed, should not grudge the people the little they might learn of them through the newspapers.

“Then, pray,” said the gentleman, “do not cut short that cause about Thirlaway's road, that kept us all waiting such a confounded time this morning. Give it all; let them have every line of it; and if you find it likely to fill your paper, you can leave out my affairs, to make room for it.”

“I hope to be able to manage both, sir. The leading arguments on each side of all the causes tried this morning can be offered without transgressing our limits.”

“Better print the other entire. Do you know, Mr. Owen, I will give you a shilling a line to see how complete a thing you can make of it, provided you leave out mine to make room.”

“You do not know the person you have to deal with, Mr. Arruther. A man cannot be a reporter for a twelvemonth without knowing something of the practice of ‘feeing the fourth estate,’ as people say. I am upon my guard, sir, I assure you; and the less you say on this head the better, for your own sake.”

“On your guard! Bless me! What an expression,—as if I had said anything wrong! Do you suppose I do not know the customs of your craft? Till the management of a newspaper becomes a less expensive affair than it is at present, I do not know what better plan there can be than making out the pay of reporters for what they bring to the compositor, by letting them take fees for what they suppress. Such a custom is so convenient to all parties, that I wonder at your pretending to dislike it.”

“When you call it convenient to all parties, sir, you seem to forget the principal party concerned. However it may be with the proprietor of the paper, and with the reporter, and those who tender the fee, it is not very convenient to the public that their supply of information should depend on the length of a few purses, whose owners may wish to make private certain of their proceedings which ought to be public. It may prove convenient to some of your constituents, sir, if not to you, that it should be known exactly how you stand in that cause which was tried this morning. It is always convenient to electors to know as much as they can learn of the character of their representatives. I believe that I have no right to keep back such information; and the report will therefore appear to-morrow, at the same length as is generally allotted to causes of that nature.”

Mr. Arruther explained in vain how particularly provoking his mother’s will had been; how unexpected it was that his cousin Ellen should have been stirred up to sue him; how little idea he had till this morning of the extent to which his lawyer had deceived him about the merits of his own case; how glad he should be if the whole could now be dropped and privately arranged; and, finally and especially, how little the public had to do with whether he tried to keep his mother’s property, or quietly let it go to somebody else. It was in vain that he urged all this. Owen could not see why any of these considerations should interfere with the advantage which the readers of the paper would derive from the knowledge of Mr. Arruther’s proceedings. That this gentleman had a bad cause to maintain might be a very sufficient reason for his present condescension, and for his offering to double and treble his bribe; but it afforded the strongest possible inducement to Owen to publish the whole, for the guidance of those who had it in their power to withdraw this unworthy man from public life. Mr. Arruther grew angry when all the offers he could make for the suppression of the report were simply declined.

“I do not know, sir, what has made you my enemy,” he observed. “But you are my enemy, sir. Don’t deny it. Do you think I am not aware of what you have done, first in trying to deprive me of the support of the editor of the ‘Western Star;’ and, when you could not succeed in that, in exposing me privately wherever you could?”

“How do you use the word ‘privately,’ Mr. Arruther? If you mean that I have whispered things to your disadvantage, or used any kind of secrecy in what I have said, you are mistaken. If you mean that I have printed nothing against you, you are quite correct; but the reason is, that I have not had the power. If there had been any independent newspaper in the district, where I might have said what you allude to, it would have saved me the trouble of writing many letters, and have enabled me to do my duty much more effectually than it has been done. If you feel yourself aggrieved from the same cause; if you desire an opportunity of publicly contradicting what has been said about your scanty attendance at the House, and the course of your political conduct when there; if you really wish for a fair discussion of your public character, you will assist those of us who are anxious to set up a newspaper as nearly independent as the circumstances of the time will allow.”

“Not I. We have too many newspapers already. I shall not countenance the setting up of any more.”

“Too many already,” repeated Owen, smiling as his eye fell on a little table on which lay seven or eight newspapers, received this morning, and destined to be replaced by the same number to-morrow. “Too many! That depends on how they are divided. Perhaps you forget, sir, that while Members of Parliament have seven or eight to themselves every day, there are seven or eight thousand people who see but one paper, and seven or eight millions of persons who never see one at all. You may feel yourself ready for your morning ride before you have half got through such a pile of papers as lies there, and may find it a tiresome part of your duty to read so much politics every day; but if you steal into the dark bye-places of a town like this, and hear what people are saying in their ignorance against being governed at all; if you go out upon the sheep-walks, and see the country folks growing into the likeness of stocks and stones, for want of having their human reason exercised; if you will ride down any Saturday into our own village, and see the scramble there is for a single copy of an inferior provincial paper, you will presently lose the fancy that we have too many newspapers already.”

“Too many by that one copy you spoke of, in my opinion, Mr. Owen. The people in Arneside did very well without any newspaper when I was a boy, I remember. I wish you had been pleased to consult me before you took such a step as sending them one. You should know better than to fall into the propensity of the time, for pampering the common people. You talk as wisely as anybody about putting gin in their way, and I do not see that they want news any more than gin. That was one of the few good things my mother used to say. When some complaint came to her ears about the price of newspapers, she asked whether anybody thought any harm of taxing gin; and whether the common people could not do without news as well as without spirits. She was right enough, for once. The common people can do without news. News is a luxury, as somebody said.”

“O, yes. News can be done without; and so can many other things. You may lock a man into a house, and he will still live. You may darken his windows from the sun at noonday, and the stars at night, and he will still live. You may let in no air but what comes down the chimney, and he will still live. You may chain him to the bed-post, you may stuff his ears, and cover his eyes, and tie his hands behind him, and he can ‘do without’ the use of his limbs and his senses, and of God’s noblest works: but it was not for this that God sent his sun on its course, and set the stars rolling in their spheres, and freshened the breezy hills, and gave muscles to our strong limbs, and nerves to our delicate organs. He did not make his beautiful world that one might walk abroad on it, while a thousand are shut into a dark dungeon. Neither did he give men the curiosity with which they watch and listen, and the imagination with which they wander forth, and the reason with which they meditate among his works, that the one might be baffled, and the others fettered and enfeebled. And what does any one gain by such tyranny? Does the sun shine more brightly when a man thinks he has it all to himself, than when the reapers are merry in the field, and the children are running after butterflies in the meadow? Would Orion glow more majestically to any one man if he could build a wall up to the high heaven, and stop the march of the constellation, and part it off, that common eyes might not look upon it? If not, neither can any one gain by shutting up that which God has made as common to the race as the lights of his firmament, and the winds which come and go as he wills. That word ‘news’ is a little word and a common word; but it means all that is great as the results of the day, and holy as the march of the starry night. It is the manifestation of man’s most freshly compounded emotions, the record of his most recent experiences, and the revelation of God’s latest providences on earth. Are these things to be kept from the many by the few, under the notion that they are property? Are these things now to be doled out at the pleasure, and to suit the purposes of an order of men, as the priests of Catholic countries measured out their thimblefull of the waters of life, in the name of him who opened up the spring, and invited every one that thirsted to come and drink freely? To none has authority been given to mete out knowledge, according to their own sense of fitness, any more than to those priests of old; but on all is imposed the religious duty of providing channels by which the vital streams of knowledge shall be brought to every man’s door. If, in this day, any man who seeks to be a social administrator desires that the few should cover up their reservoirs lest they should overflow for the refreshment of the many, it is no wonder if his cistern grows so foul as to make him question in right earnest at last, whether there be not something more poisonous in the draught than in gin itself; and much that is perilous in the eagerness of the crowd who rush to lap whatever cannot be prevented from leaking out.”

“You mean to say that our universities are fouled reservoirs, I suppose? It would become you to speak more modestly till you have been there.”

“I know nothing of what is within the universities, further than by watching what comes out. The vague idea that I have of the knowledge that pervades them is perhaps as reverential as you, or any other son of such an institution, can desire: but I own that my reverence would be more ardent and affectionate if I could see that that knowledge made its partakers happier than it does.”

“Happier! How can you possibly tell? How should you know, when I am the only university-man, I believe, that you are acquainted with?”

“I judge by what I see. When men enjoy, the next thing is to communicate; especially when by communicating they lose nothing themselves. But it is not so in this case. What have the universities done towards showing the beauty and holiness of knowledge, as the most universal and the highest blessing which God has given to the living and breathing race of man? What have the universities done to diffuse their own treasures into every corner of the land? How have they applied their knowledge towards the promotion of the happiness of the state,—opening their doors to all who would come in, discovering or sanctioning the best principles of legislation and government, countenancing public and private virtue, and being foremost in proposing and enforcing whatever might fulfil the final purposes of knowledge by making the greatest number of rational beings as wise and happy as the circumstances of the age will admit? While I see nothing of all this attempted by our universities, I feel more respect and affection for the studies which are going forward within a mechanics’ Institution (crude and superficial studies, perhaps, but tending to promote the substantial happiness of the race), than for the pursuits of a university, or any other place, where intellectual luxury is reserved to pamper the few while the many starve.”

“I do not see much starving in the case, when we have not only too many regular newspapers, but scores of unstamped publications, which circulate their scores of thousands each. Precious stuff for your common people to batten upon!”

“When we once come to the question of quality, sir, there may be less to be said than about quantity. Is there anything here,—or here,”—taking up the “John Bull” and the “Age,” “that will make the public wiser and better than they would become by reading the ‘Twopenny Treat’ or the ‘Poor Man’s Guardian.’ That there is any such ‘precious stuff’ for readers to batten on is the fault of those who, by keeping up one newspaper monopoly, have created another.”

“What new monopoly, pray? And what public would ever endure two monopolies of the same article?”

“There are two publics to suffer by the two monopolies. While the tax-gatherers take five-pence out of every seven-pence that is given for a newspaper; while the practice of advertising is so kept down by the duty as to deprive the proprietors of their legitimate profits; while a capital of between thirty and forty thousand pounds is required to conduct a good daily paper, no journal will or can be honest, cheap, and successful; and the middle classes, who can afford to see only one paper, will suffer by the long-established monopoly of the old journals. While men of more wit than capital are tempted or driven to evade the law; while adventurers below the reach of the law are virtually invited to defy and vilify it, the large class of poor readers will suffer by the pernicious monopoly which not his Majesty nor all his Ministers can break up, as long as legal newspapers are made to cost seven-pence, while illegal ones may be had for two-pence.—Have you seen any of these illegal publications?”

“Yes. Precious stuff! Falsehoods in every sentence; blunders in every line; as any one who chose might show in a minute.”

“Unfortunately, no one will choose it, in the present state of affairs. It must be easy enough to controvert any publication so bad as you describe; but the opportunity is not allowed. These falsehoods and blunders are crammed down the people’s throats, and no one can unchoke them, because the law interferes to prevent the free circulation of opinions. I know of a young man at Arneside who actually believes that all master manufacturers make it a principle and a pleasure to oppress and worry their workmen, and that all rulers study nothing so regularly and strenuously as how to wring the hearts of the greatest number of people. He reads this (among a hundred better things) in one of these unstamped publications, which would either have never existed at all, or have treated very differently of politics, if the Stamp Commissioners had taught it no lesson of hatred against the law.”

“Ah! you mean that brother of yours. I heard how he was going, poor fool!”

“If he is a poor fool, what is it that has prevented his being wise? He has shown his disposition to become so by his eagerness after such reading as he can obtain; and if he has got so far as to learn the strength of a bad argument, alas for those who step in to prevent his getting farther, and learning its weakness in the presence of a better! If he cannot find sound political teachers, where lies the blame?”

“If you had newspapers quite free, who do you suppose would write for the common people? We should be inundated with blasphemous and seditious publications.”

“When a man goes with his money in his hand to purchase a newspaper, do you think he is asked whether he is one of the common people? And when newspapers sell for the cost of production and a fair profit, who is likely to produce the best, and sell the most,—the respectable and educated capitalist, or the ignorant and needy agitator? When newspapers have fair play, their success will depend, I fancy, like that of other articles, on their quality; and I never yet heard of any instance in which any class of people failed to purchase the better article in preference to the worse, when both were fairly set before them. Moreover, I never heard of a wise and kind government, whether of a single family, a city, or a nation, that did not desire rather than fear that its proceedings should be known and discussed.”

“Ah! that shows how little you know of the plague and mischief of being talked over, when any business is in hand. If you were in the place of those who have to transact affairs on the continent, and in our colonies, you would be too much vexed to laugh at the nonsense that people believe about us. There is nothing too monstrous or ridiculous to be credited. A plague on the foolish tongues that spread such things!”

“Or rather on the policy which allows such reports to be originated and to pass current. If a multitude of the King’s subjects at home, and of his allies abroad, believe all that is monstrous of his government, and all that is ridiculous of his people, it seems time that better means of knowledge should be given to both. While the world lasts, social beings can never be prevented discussing their rulers and their

neighbours; and if we are annoyed at their errors, the alternative is not silence but truth. When newspapers circulate untaxed, and not till then, there will be an approach to a general understanding, and to social peace.”

“You are not exactly the person to talk of social peace, I think, Mr. Owen, when you are bent on setting me and my electors at variance by publishing my family quarrels, in spite of all I can say.”

Owen did not choose to remain to be insulted by further entreaties that he would take a bribe. He rose, observing that this was a case in which he had no more concern than with a quarrel in the Cabinet, and no more option than in announcing an earthquake at Aleppo. He was a reporter, and nothing more. If Mr. Arruther had anything further to say, he must make his appeal to the proprietors of the “Western Star.”

A few last words were vouchsafed to him before he left the room. Their purpose was to assure him that if this report appeared, he need never apply to Mr. Arruther for assistance, in case of his fool of a brother getting into any scrape, or he himself ever being tried for libel, or any disaster, public or private, befalling him. If Owen should, on consideration, decide to accommodate Mr. Arruther, that gentleman would see what he could do on any occasion when he might be of service.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter VIII.

FAMILY SECRETS.

Mr. Arruther's evil bodings had had some effect in depressing Owen's spirits before he opened the following letter from his mother, which he found on the table of his little apartment when he reached his lodgings. Nurse's share of the correspondence with her son usually consisted of cheerful and loving messages, sent by some friendly mediator who might be likely to see Owen, or was about to drop him a line on business. She had never before sent a letter, but once; and that was when the clergyman had stopped her in the churchyard, not only to ask after all her children, but to praise them according to their respective deserts. On that occasion, nurse had gone straight to the schoolmaster, and asked him to give her a seat beside his desk, while she told him what she wished to express to Owen. Then, how had her maternal modesty raised the blush on her cheek while she made the effort to repeat the clergyman's words! and how, while she looked round on the blazing fire, the superior lamp, the sanded floor, and neat shelf of books, did she assure herself that her old narrow cottage, with its brick floor, was just as happy a place to so favoured a mother as herself! She now wrote under different circumstances, as her letter will show.

“My Dear Son,

“This letter does not come out of the schoolroom you know so well, as the last did; though your old teacher is so good as to be still the writer. I have asked him to come home with me, though mine is but a poor place compared with his. One reason is, that I did not wish anybody to overhear what I am going to tell you; and there is no fear of being overheard at home, as I am mostly alone of an evening. And now I feel the disadvantage of not being able to write myself,—that I am obliged to get another to write what I have to say against my own children. Yet not against them, neither: for that seems a hard word to say: but I mean I should have been loth anybody should know that we are not altogether so happy as we once were, if I could have let you know it in any other way than this. The short of the matter is, Owen, that Ambrose is in such a way that I cannot tell what to say to him next. He and Mr. Waugh have been quarrelling sadly. It is not for me to say which is right; and, to be sure, many of Mr. Waugh's other workpeople have been doing the same thing: but all I know is that there were no such troubles before Ambrose joined the Lodge, as they call it; and Mr. Waugh gives the same wages as before, and living is cheaper. I can only say now that Ambrose is tramping about, here and there, when work is over, and at times when he used to be at home; and that he is grown fond of show; attending a brother's funeral, as he called it, yesterday, and thinking more of the blue ribbons and the procession, I am afraid, than that a fellow-mortal was gone to his account. Indeed, he said in the middle of it that there is nothing like ceremony after all; which is not just what the Lord would have us think when he calls a brother away. I lay it all to the newspaper that Mr. Ryan brought; and the more that Mr. Ryan was taken up for selling it, and is

now in prison on that account. I little thought that a child of mine would ever have to do with what was unlawful; and I never would have looked at the pictures in this paper if I had guessed what the justices would think: but Ambrose was pleased with what Ryan did when he was taken up; though folks suppose he will not be let out the sooner for it. He made a great flourish in the street, and cried out, 'Englishmen, will you suffer this?' It made my heart turn within me to think that one that I have known as an honest man for so many years should carry his grey hairs into a prison; and I never would have believed that Ryan would do any thing wrong. Ambrose says he has not, and is getting up a rejoicing against he comes out of prison: but the justices say he has; and so what is one to think? But I wish your brother would be persuaded to give up thinking of making a triumph against the justices, when Ryan comes out. I tell him that it is no triumph, after all, considering that Ryan will then have been in prison all the time that it was thought fit he should be there. But the time is past when anything is minded that I say; though I ought not to complain, and do not; being aware, as I always was, that I say little that is worth minding. Yet I never had to say this of you; and I am much mistaken if Ambrose be wiser than you. You will be asking whether I comfort myself with Mildred. My dear, I can only say now that Mildred is no comfort to me; and if you ask me why, I can no more tell you what has come over her than if I lived at L—. Sometimes I think, God help me! that the poor girl hates me,—for never a word does she speak to me now, when she can manage to hold her tongue; and, as sure as ever any neighbour goes out and leaves us together, she is off like a shot, and I see no more of her till some third person is here again, even if that does not happen till morning. I should be truly thankful if any one would find out the reason of such a change, for it is more than I can well bear, if it is not a sin to say so. I try to comfort myself, my dear boy, with thinking of you who are nothing but a blessing to me. I try to be thankful, as in duty bound: but it so happens, while you are so far away, and the others just before my eyes, or expected home every moment and not coming, I cannot be comforted as it is my duty to be. It is another trouble to find the neighbours not what they were to me. Farmer Mason would not let me go and nurse his wife yesterday, ill as she is, and with nobody to watch her properly of a night. He said his cattle had pined of late, and he had lost all his fowls; looking at me, just as if I could have helped his losses, when there is nobody more sorry than I am that such mishaps should have followed the fire that well nigh ruined him, so long ago. And so it seems with others who do not look friendly upon me as they did. Everything appears to be going wrong with everybody; and we do not seem able to comfort one another as we used to do. This is a sad saying to end with; so I just add that Kate Jeffery is the same good girl, whatever changes come over others; and I depend on her going on in her own right way. You will be glad to hear this; and I hope you will not make yourself too uneasy about the rest: but I could not help opening my mind to you, having always done so before, and never with so much occasion. And now I shall wish to know if you have anything to say upon this. He that holds the pen promises to read me whatever you may write, very exactly, and to keep all a secret, we so desiring. So no more now, except that Mrs. Dowley has got another boy, and poor widow Wilks's eldest has had the measles very bad, but is now better," &c. &c.

Owen had not the least doubt of his old teacher's accuracy in reading the letter now requested, or of his discretion about its contents; but Owen had no intention of

committing to paper what he had to say. He must go down to Arneside, without delay, and see whether anything could be done to make the people there happier than they seemed to be at present. He obtained leave to go down, the next afternoon; and, in the meantime, got no sleep for thinking of his mother's sorrows, and of the hours that must pass before he could do anything to relieve them.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

Chapter IX.

THE MYSTERIES LAID OPEN.

While nurse was by turns dictating her letter and sighing, till the scribe caught the infection, and lost his spirits; while the wind moaned in the crevices of the rickety dwelling, and the flame of the single candle flared and flickered in the draughts of the poor apartment, Ambrose was under a securer shelter, and Mildred under none at all. Ambrose had been assisting in swearing in new brothers who had joined his lodge. He had helped to blindfold them, and to guide them through the mummeries which were calculated to answer any purpose rather than that of adding sanctity to an oath. The jargon of the verse to be gabbled over, the dressing up, the locking in, were more like the Christmas games of very young school-boys than the actual proceedings, the serious business of grown men. Mummery has usually or always arisen from an inconvenient lack of shorter and plainer methods of explanation, and of facilities for communication. This sort of picture-writing is discarded, by common consent, wherever the press comes in to fulfil the object with more ease, speed, and exactitude. When Ambrose declared that “there is nothing like ceremony, after all,” he testified that he belonged to a nation or a class which is stunted in the best means of communication, and kept in an infantine state of knowledge and pursuit. If he had been growing up to a period of mature wisdom, like his brother, he would have told the brethren of his lodge that there is nothing so childish as ceremony, after all. To form into a lodge, or a company, or whatever it may be called, when a number of men have business to do, is the most ready and unobjectionable method of transacting that business; but if the brethren cannot be kept in order and harmony without being amused by shows, or excited by mystification, they had far better be playing cricket on the green, than pretend to assist in conducting the serious affairs of their class. Much better would it have been for Ambrose to have been playing cricket on the green this evening, than frightening people even more ignorant than himself with death’s heads, horrible threats, and oaths made up of the most alarming words that could be picked out of the vocabulary of unstamped newspapers. Much better would it have been for him to have been reading anything,—book, pamphlet, or newspaper,—than to have sent his sister on such an errand as she was transacting on the hills.

Mildred was made, without her own knowledge, a servant of the lodge, a messenger from all the discontented with whom Ambrose was connected to all the discontented in the district. This trouble was imposed upon her because the country folks were unable to read, and paper was dear, and advertisements were dearer still. The object was to bring people together to consult on their fortunes, and the measures that should be taken to mend them. Mr. Arruther would have said that it was well that so improper an object should be frustrated by the absence of all assistance from the press: but Mr. Arruther might have been told that there is no frustrating such an object; and that the only effect of the press not being concerned in it was, that the summons bore a very different character from what it would have had, if there had

been perfect freedom of communication. In a newspaper, the notice would have been that people were to meet at such a spot, at such an hour, and for such and such a purpose. As it was, Mildred was scudding over the hills, shivering whenever the gust overtook her, as if it must bring something dreadful; starting if she found any one awaiting her at the appointed places, and trembling if it was herself that must wait; and faltering or gabbling in equal terror, as she delivered the circular which was to be carried forwards by those whom she met; the circular being as follows:—

“Meet on Arneford Green,
Six and seven between.
Bring words as sharp as sickles,
To cut the throats
Of gentlefolks,
That rob the poor of victuals.
Hungry guts and empty purse
May be better, can’t be worse.”

The political wisdom of the district had discovered that all was going wrong within it. Farmer Mason’s live stock was dying off, and his wife had been long confined to her bed with some grievous affliction. Neighbour Green’s dog had gone mad, and had been very near biting some children that were playing in the road. The wheat on the uplands looked poorly; and the mill-stream was dry; so that many of Mr. Waugh’s workpeople were out of employ. It must be a very bad government that allowed all this to happen at once, some people said: but there were many who hinted that the blame did not all rest with the Government, and that there was one person who might some day prove to have had more to do with those disasters than everybody liked to say. This hint had gone the round, and become amplified in its course, till it was considered a settled matter by every one who entertained the subject at all, that nurse Ede was quite as pernicious to Arneside as the Government and all the gentlefolks put together; and that there should be no attempt at rebellion till nurse had been called to account for her witcheries.

The affair had been brought to a crisis by this evening, when Mildred was delivering her circular on the hills. She was expected and lain in wait for. Suddenly she fell in with a party who would not let her proceed till she had been sworn on her knees to tell all she knew of her mother’s proceedings, of the nature of her intercourse with her black cat, and of the uses of the mysterious apparatus which now filled her cupboard as well as the shelf. The girl knew nothing of what she was required to confess; but she did what she could to please her tyrants. She poured out all the nonsensical fancies, all the absurd suspicions, which had been accumulating in her ignorant mind from the days of her childhood till now. The sum total proved even more satisfactory than the party had expected.—There was now but one thing to be done. Nurse must be forced to recant, and make reparation; and that as soon as possible. The managers of the enterprise must not quit their hold of her till she had begun to restore Mrs. Mason; revive the calves and poultry that remained alive, if she could not restore those which were dead; set the mill-wheel revolving again; brought showers upon the upland corn-fields, and confessed precisely what kind and degree of influence she had exerted over

poor Mrs. Arruther: for it was not to be forgotten how the lightning had split the tree beside the lady's monument, the last thing before it fired Farmer Mason's barn.

While all this was passing, nurse had dismissed the good-natured schoolmaster, and had looked after him from the door, shading her candle with her apron, till she could see him no longer; and had sat down, with a sigh at her loneliness, to mend one more pair of stockings for Ambrose, to take the chance of one or other of her children coming home for the night. She had nearly given the matter up when she thought she heard a little noise outside the door. As she looked up, she saw a very white face pressed close to the window, and looking in upon her.

"Come in! Who's there? Lift up the latch and come in, whoever you are," cried she, who, having never wished harm to any human being, had no fear of receiving harm from the hands of any. "My girl!" exclaimed she, as Mildred stood on the threshold, looking uncertain whether to set foot in the cottage, or to retreat, "My dear, ye are right enough to come home to a warm bed to-night. It will be but a chilly night for sleeping beside the fold, if that is really what ye do when ye don't come home. I've been looking for ye, my dear; so, come in, and shut the door, and see what supper I've been keeping ready for ye. Why do ye keep standing outside in that way, Mildred?"

As nurse sat at the table, looking over her spectacles, with her candle on one side, and the cat on the other, drowsily opening and shutting its eyes, as if quite at ease, there seemed to be something which prevented Mildred from advancing a step towards the party. She only said in a shrill tone,

"They're coming."

Who was coming,—whether Ambrose and the brethren from the lodge, or the long-dreaded Turks, or any people more to be feared still, could not be ascertained. All that could be got out of Mildred was, "They're coming." The door was still standing wide, the parley was still proceeding, when they came.

A night of horrors followed; horrors which were once perpetrated in the metropolitan cities of mighty empires; and then descended to inferior towns; and then were banished to the country; and now are seldom to be heard of, even in the remotest haunts of ignorance. But such horrors are not yet extinct. Since the sacrifice of nurse Ede, others, perhaps as guileless and kind of heart, have met a fate like hers.

During the whole of the dreadful scene of violence and torment, the mother called on her children. As if they had all been present, she implored them to bear witness as to what her life had been, and to save her from her persecutors. She had reared her sons with incessant watchfulness, from the time that their little hands could only grasp her finger, up to the manly strength which might have saved her now: but Owen was far away, dreaming of no evil; and as for Ambrose, his face was never seen, all that night. Mildred was present,—standing in her mother's view during all those fearful hours; but the call on her was also in vain. She stood staring, with her arms by her sides, and her hair on end, only wincing and moving back a little when her mother's appeals to her became particularly vehement. This was the child who had been the object of as

fond parental hopes as had ever been shed over the unconsciousness of infancy. Hers was the arm which was to have been her mother's support to church on Sabbath days. Hers were the hands which were to have relieved her parent of the more laborious of their homely tasks. She it was who should have enlivened the day with her cheerful industry, and amused the evening with the intelligence which nurse had done her best to put in the way of improvement. This was the child! And this was the contrast which flitted through her unhappy mother's mind as she was dragged past Mrs. Arruther's monument, and taunted with the memory of that poor lady.

Mrs. Arruther and she were both unhappy as mothers. The child of the one was as destitute (whatever might be his scholarship) of all the knowledge which is of most value in the conduct and embellishment of life, as these his despised neighbours; and the protracted torment which he caused his parent might, in its sum, equal that which nurse was enduring to-night. The crowning proof of his substantial ignorance was his desire and endeavour to keep others in that state of darkness of which the deeds of this night were some of the results. There will be no more mothers so wretched as Mrs. Arruther and her nurse when mothers themselves shall know how to give their children true knowledge; and when their children shall have access to that true knowledge without hindrance and without measure.

One thrilling sound of complaint at last penetrated the chamber of the clergyman; and, in consequence, nurse was presently in her own bed, attended upon by Kate Jeffery, while Mildred sat in a corner of the cottage, staring as before. She let Kate bring her to the bedside, when her parent's unquenchable tenderness was kindling up once more; but the girl was pitiably at a loss what to say, and how to conduct herself.

"I never did, my dear; if you will believe the last words I shall ever speak. I never did, or thought of doing such things as they say. Tell them so, when I am gone; will you? Only tell them what I said. O Mildred, cannot you promise me even that much?"

"She is mazed," said Kate Jeffery, in excuse of her old play-fellow. "She will come to, by-and-by."

"I wish I was mazed, if it be not thankless to say so," muttered nurse. "But it will all be over soon. Well: it is God's will that my son Owen is so far from me at this time."

She little guessed how soon her son Owen would be standing where Kate was now. But, soon as it was, it was too late for nurse.

It was indeed a withered and haggard cheek (as nurse once anticipated) that her children looked upon as they watched her rest;—not her breathing sleep, but her last long rest. Owen must have been quite overthrown by meeting such a shock on his arrival, or he could never have spoken to Mildred as he did. He upbraided her for the stupidity with which she had given ear to the ridiculous falsehoods which had been hatched against one of the most harmless women that had ever lived: falsehoods that any child in L— would have been ashamed to be asked to believe. But it was impossible that Mildred, or any one else, could have really credited such things. It could have been only a pretence—

“No; no pretence,” Kate interposed to say. “There would have been no malice, if there had not been profound ignorance. No one could have helped loving nurse, and doing nothing but good to her, up to her dying day, if it had but been known why and how she practised her art; and that no woman has really the power, by prayers and charms, of stopping mill-streams and maddening dogs.”

“How could I tell?” mournfully asked Mildred. “They all said—I’m sure I thought they would have killed me first. They all said, and they all think, that she was an awful and a wicked woman; and what else could I think? I’m sure I never durst touch her, or scarce anything that she had touched before me, after what Maude Hallowell told me.”

“You are out of your mind, I think,” said Owen, bitterly. “To talk as you do, and she lying there!”

“And if Mildred was out of her mind, Mr. Owen,” said Kate, in a low voice, “is she to be taunted with it, as if it was her fault? I should rather say that she has very little mind; for hers seems to me never to have grown since we were at the Sunday school together. Surely, Mr. Owen, it is the narrow mind that is least able to help itself under foolish fears, and any horrible fancy that may be riding it till it is weary. Surely it is not merciful to taunt a mind that is so miserable in itself already.”

“Then I will not taunt her, Kate. It will be sorrow enough to her, all her days, to have to pass my mother’s grave, and think how she was sent there. Go, poor girl, and tell the clergyman that it is all over. Nobody shall hurt you: I will take care of you. Nobody shall blame you: the blame shall rest elsewhere.”

“Where?” asked the bewildered girl, as, in a flurried manner, she tied on her bonnet to go to the clergyman. “What are you going to do now, Owen? Where—what did you say last?”

“That nobody shall blame you, as I did just now, for what has happened to our mother. It is no fault of yours, Mildred, any more than it can be called Ambrose’s fault that he now lies in prison—”

“In prison!”

“Yes: he has been taken there (God knows whether according to law or not) for the part he has taken about swearing in the brothers at his Lodge. There he was, poor fellow, when my mother was calling upon him in a way to break a heart of stone, they say.” Owen saw the convulsion which passed over his sister’s countenance as he made this allusion; and he resolved to refer to that dreadful scene no more. “Whatever may be done with Ambrose, he has perished. His life is blasted, whether, as some suppose, he is sent abroad, or whether his punishment is to be worked out at home. How should he have known better? The only bit of law he knew, he learned by accident from a newspaper; and when he would have learned more, the only lesson-book he could get taught him wrong; and it could never have taught him so wrong, if those which would have instructed him better had not been kept out of his reach. The

judge and gaoler are to be his teachers now. Those little know what they are about who take pains,—for any purpose,—to hold men ignorant. If they could keep the light of the sun from the earth with the thickest of clouds, they would do mischief enough in making the plants come up sickly, and the tall trees dwindle away, and rendering every thing fearful and dismal, wherever we turn: but all this is harmless trifling compared with the practice of keeping the mind without the light which God has provided for it. This it is that brings discontented towards God, and bad passions among men; temptation to guilt to the careless, and long heart-suffering to the kindest and best; and the fiercest of murders as the end of all. O, mother! mother!”

the end.

[*] Since done.