

The Caxtons, Part 7

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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PART VII.

CHAPTER I.

Saith Dr. Luther, "When I saw Dr. Gode begin to tell his puddings hanging in the chimney, I told him he would not live long!"

I wish I had copied that passage from "The Table Talk" in large round hand, and set it before my father at breakfast, the morn preceding that fatal eve in which Uncle Jack persuaded him to tell his puddings.

Yet, now I think of it, Uncle Jack hung the puddings in the chimney, but he did not persuade my father to tell them.

Beyond a vague surmise that half the suspended "tomacula" would furnish a breakfast to Uncle Jack, and that the youthful appetite of Pisistratus would despatch the rest, my father did not give a thought to the nutritious properties of the puddings,--in other words, to the two thousand pounds which, thanks to Mr. Tibbets, dangled down the chimney. So far as the Great Work was concerned, my father only cared for its publication, not its profits. I will not say that he might not hunger for praise, but I am quite sure that he did not care a button for pudding. Nevertheless, it was an infaust and sinister augury for Austin Caxton, the very appearance, the very suspension and danglement of any puddings whatsoever, right over his ingle-nook, when those puddings were made by the sleek hands of Uncle Jack! None of the puddings which he, poor man, had all his life been stringing, whether from his own chimneys or the chimneys of other people, had turned out to be real puddings,--they had always been the eidola, the erscheinungen, the phantoms and semblances of puddings.

I question if Uncle Jack knew much about Democritus of Abdera. But he was certainly tainted with the philosophy of that fanciful sage. He peopled the air with images of colossal stature which impressed all his dreams and divinations, and from whose influences came his very sensations and thoughts. His whole being, asleep or waking, was thus but the reflection of great phantom puddings!

As soon as Mr. Tibbets had possessed himself of the two volumes of the "History of Human Error," he had necessarily established that hold upon my father which hitherto those lubricate hands of his had failed to effect. He had found what he had so long sighed for in vain,--his point d'appui, wherein to fix the Archimedean screw. He fixed it tight in the "History of Human Error," and moved the Caxtonian world.

A day or two after the conversation recorded in my last chapter, I saw Uncle Jack coming out of the mahogany doors of my father's banker; and from that time there seemed no reason why Mr. Tibbets should not visit his relations on weekdays as well as Sundays. Not a day, indeed, passed but what he held long conversations with my father. He had much to report of his interviews with the publishers. In these conversations he naturally recurred to that grand idea of the "Literary Times," which had

so dazzled my poor father's imagination; and, having heated the iron, Uncle Jack was too knowing a man not to strike while it was hot.

When I think of the simplicity my wise father exhibited in this crisis of his life, I must own that I am less moved by pity than admiration for that poor great-hearted student. We have seen that out of the learned indolence of twenty years, the ambition which is the instinct of a man of genius had emerged; the serious preparation of the Great Book for the perusal of the world had insensibly restored the claims of that noisy world on the silent individual. And therewith came a noble remorse that he had hitherto done so little for his species. Was it enough to write quartos upon the past history of Human Error? Was it not his duty, when the occasion was fairly presented, to enter upon that present, daily, hourly war with Error, which is the sworn chivalry of Knowledge? Saint George did not dissect dead dragons, he fought the live one. And London, with that magnetic atmosphere which in great capitals fills the breath of life with stimulating particles, had its share in quickening the slow pulse of the student. In the country he read but his old authors, and lived with them through the gone ages. In the city, my father, during the intervals of repose from the Great Book, and still more now that the Great Book had come to a pause, inspected the literature of his own time. It had a prodigious effect upon him. He was unlike the ordinary run of scholars, and, indeed, of readers, for that matter, who, in their superstitious homage to the dead, are always willing enough to sacrifice the living. He did justice to the marvellous fertility of intellect which characterizes the authorship of the present age. By the present age, I do not only mean the present day, I commence with the century. "What," said my father one day in dispute with Trevanion, "what characterizes the literature of our time is its human interest. It is true that we do not see scholars addressing scholars, but men addressing men,--not that scholars are fewer, but that the reading public is more large. Authors in all ages address themselves to what interests their readers; the same things do not interest a vast community which interested half a score of monks or book-worms. The literary polls was once an oligarchy, it is now a republic. It is the general brilliancy of the atmosphere which prevents your noticing the size of any particular star. Do you not see that with the cultivation of the masses has awakened the Literature of the affections? Every sentiment finds an expositor, every feeling an oracle. Like Epimenides, I have been sleeping in a cave; and, waking, I see those whom I left children are bearded men, and towns have sprung up in the landscapes which I left as solitary wastes."

Thence the reader may perceive the causes of the change which had come over my father. As Robert Hall says, I think of Dr. Kippis. "He had laid so many books at the top of his head that the brains could not move." But the electricity had now penetrated the heart, and the quickened vigor of that noble organ enabled the brain to stir. Meanwhile, I leave my father to these influences, and to the continuous conversations of Uncle Jack, and proceed with the thread of my own egotism.

Thanks to Mr. Trevanion, my habits were not those which favor friendships with the idle, but I formed some acquaintances amongst young men a few years older than myself, who held subordinate situations in the public offices, or were keeping their terms for the Bar. There was no want of ability amongst these gentlemen, but they had not yet settled into the stern prose of life. Their busy hours only made them more disposed to enjoy the hours of relaxation. And when we got together, a

very gay, light-hearted set we were! We had neither money enough to be very extravagant, nor leisure enough to be very dissipated; but we amused ourselves notwithstanding. My new friends were wonderfully erudite in all matters connected with the theatres. From an opera to a ballet, from "Hamlet" to the last farce from the French, they had the literature of the stage at the finger-ends of their straw-colored gloves. They had a pretty large acquaintance with actors and actresses, and were perfect Walpoladi in the minor scandals of the day. To do them justice, however, they were not indifferent to the more masculine knowledge necessary in "this wrong world." They talked as familiarly of the real actors of life as of the sham ones. They could adjust to a hair the rival pretensions of contending statesmen. They did not profess to be deep in the mysteries of foreign cabinets (with the exception of one young gentleman connected with the Foreign Office, who prided himself on knowing exactly what the Russians meant to do with India--when they got it); but, to make amends, the majority of them had penetrated the closest secrets of our own. It is true that, according to a proper subdivision of labor, each took some particular member of the government for his special observation; just as the most skilful surgeons, however profoundly versed in the general structure of our frame, rest their anatomical fame on the light they throw on particular parts of it,--one man taking the brain, another the duodenum, a third the spinal cord, while a fourth, perhaps, is a master of all the symptoms indicated by a pensile finger. Accordingly, one of my friends appropriated to himself the Home Department; another the Colonies; and a third, whom we all regarded as a future Talleyrand (or a De Retz at least), had devoted himself to the special study of Sir Robert Peel, and knew, by the way in which that profound and inscrutable statesman threw open his coat, every thought that was passing in his breast! Whether lawyers or officials, they all had a great idea of themselves,--high notions of what they were to be, rather than what they were to do, some day. As the king of modern fine gentlemen said to himself, in paraphrase of Voltaire, "They had letters in their pockets addressed to Posterity,--which the chances were, however, that they might forget to deliver." Somewhat "priggish" most of them might be; but, on the whole, they were far more interesting than mere idle men of pleasure. There was about them, as features of a general family likeness, a redundant activity of life, a gay exuberance of ambition, a light-hearted earnestness when at work, a schoolboy's enjoyment of the hours of play.

A great contrast to these young men was Sir Sedley Beaudesert, who was pointedly kind to me, and whose bachelor's house was always open to me after noon: Sir Sedley was visible to no one but his valet before that hour. A perfect bachelor's house it was, too, with its windows opening on the Park, and sofas nicked into the windows, on which you might loll at your ease, like the philosopher in Lucretius,--

"Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre Errare,"--

and see the gay crowds ride to and fro Rotten Row, without the fatigue of joining them, especially if the wind was in the east.

There was no affectation of costliness about the rooms, but a wonderful accumulation of comfort. Every patent chair that proffered a variety in the art of lounging found its place there; and near every chair a little table, on which you might deposit your book or your coffee-cup, without the trouble of moving more than your hand. In winter, nothing warmer than the quilted curtains and Axminster carpets can be conceived; in summer, nothing airier and cooler than the muslin draperies and the

Indian mattings. And I defy a man to know to what perfection dinner may be brought, unless he had dined with Sir Sedley Beaudesert. Certainly, if that distinguished personage had but been an egotist, he had been the happiest of men. But, unfortunately for him, he was singularly amiable and kind-hearted. He had the *bonne digestion*, but not the other requisite for worldly felicity,--the *mauvais cœur*. He felt a sincere pity for every one else who lived in rooms without patent chairs and little coffee-tables, whose windows did not look on the Park, with sofas niched into their recesses. As Henry IV. wished every man to have his *pot au feu*, so Sir Sedley Beaudesert, if he could have had his way, would have every man served with an early cucumber for his fish, and a caraffe of iced water by the side of his bread and cheese. He thus evinced on politics a naive simplicity which delightfully contrasted his acuteness on matters of taste. I remember his saying, in a discussion on the Beer Bill, "The poor ought not to be allowed to drink beer, it is so particularly rheumatic! The best drink in hard work is dry champagne,--not *vtousseux*; I found that out when I used to shoot on the moors."

Indolent as Sir Sedley was, he had contrived to open an extraordinary number of drains on his wealth.

First, as a landed proprietor there was no end to applications from distressed farmers, aged poor, benefit societies, and poachers he had thrown out of employment by giving up his preserves to please his tenants.

Next, as a man of pleasure the whole race of womankind had legitimate demands on him. From a distressed duchess whose picture lay perdu under a secret spring of his snuff-box, to a decayed laundress to whom he might have paid a compliment on the perfect involutions of a frill, it was quite sufficient to be a daughter of Eve to establish a just claim on Sir Sedley's inheritance from Adam.

Again, as an amateur of art and a respectful servant of every muse, all whom the public had failed to patronize,--painter, actor, poet, musician,--turned, like dying sunflowers to the sun, towards the pitying smile of Sir Sedley Beaudesert. Add to these the general miscellaneous multitude who "had heard of Sir Sedley's high character for benevolence," and one may well suppose what a very costly reputation he had set up. In fact, though Sir Sedley could not spend on what might fairly be called "himself" a fifth part of his very handsome income, I have no doubt that he found it difficult to make both ends meet at the close of the year. That he did so, he owed perhaps to two rules which his philosophy had peremptorily adopted. He never made debts, and he never gambled. For both these admirable aberrations from the ordinary routine of fine gentlemen I believe he was indebted to the softness of his disposition. He had a great compassion for a wretch who was dunned. "Poor fellow!" he would say, "it must be so painful to him to pass his life in saying 'No.'" So little did he know about that class of promisers,--as if a man dunned ever said 'No!' As Beau Brummell, when asked if he was fond of vegetables, owned that he had once eat a pea, so Sir Sedley Beaudesert owned that he had once played high at piquet. "I was so unlucky as to win," said he, referring to that indiscretion, "and I shall never forget the anguish on the face of the man who paid me. Unless I could always lose, it would be a perfect purgatory to play."

Now nothing could be more different in their kinds of benevolence than Sir Sedley and Mr. Trevanion. Mr. Trevanion had a great contempt for

individual charity. He rarely put his hand into his purse,--he drew a great check on his bankers. Was a congregation without a church, or a village without a school, or a river without a bridge, Mr. Trevanion set to work on calculations, found out the exact sum required by an algebraic $x-y$, and paid it as he would have paid his butcher. It must be owned that the distress of a man whom he allowed to be deserving, did not appeal to him in vain. But it is astonishing how little he spent in that way; for it was hard indeed to convince Mr. Trevanion that a deserving man ever was in such distress as to want charity.

That Trevanion, nevertheless, did infinitely more real good than Sir Sedley, I believe; but he did it as a mental operation,--by no means as an impulse from the heart. I am sorry to say that the main difference was this,--distress always seemed to accumulate round Sir Sedley, and vanish from the presence of Trevanion. Where the last came, with his busy, active, searching mind, energy woke, improvement sprang up. Where the first came, with his warm, kind heart, a kind of torpor spread under its rays; people lay down and basked in the liberal sunshine. Nature in one broke forth like a brisk, sturdy winter; in the other like a lazy Italian summer. Winter is an excellent invigorator, no doubt, but we all love summer better.

Now, it is a proof how lovable Sir Sedley was, that I loved him, and yet was jealous of him. Of all the satellites round my fair Cynthia, Fanny Trevanion, I dreaded most this amiable luminary. It was in vain for me to say, with the insolence of youth, that Sir Sedley Beaudesert was of the same age as Fanny's father; to see them together, he might have passed for Trevanion's son. No one amongst the younger generation was half so handsome as Sedley Beaudesert. He might be eclipsed at first sight by the showy effect of more redundant locks and more brilliant bloom; but he had but to speak, to smile, in order to throw a whole cohort of dandies into the shade. It was the expression of his countenance that was so bewitching; there was something so kindly in its easy candor, its benign good-nature. And he understood women so well! He flattered their foibles so insensibly; he commanded their affection with so gracious a dignity. Above all, what with his accomplishments, his peculiar reputation, his long celibacy, and the soft melancholy of his sentiments, he always contrived to interest them. There was not a charming woman by whom this charming man did not seem just on the point of being caught! It was like the sight of a splendid trout in a transparent stream, sailing pensively to and fro your fly, in a willand-a-won't sort of a way. Such a trout! it would be a thousand pities to leave him, when evidently so well disposed! That trout, fair maid or gentle widow, would have kept youwhipping the stream and dragging the fly--from morning to dewy eve. Certainly I don't wish worse to my bitterest foe of five and twenty than such a rival as Sedley Beaudesert at seven and forty.

Fanny, indeed, perplexed me horribly. Sometimes I fancied she liked me; but the fancy scarce thrilled me with delight before it vanished in the frost of a careless look or the cold beam of a sarcastic laugh. Spoiled darling of the world as she was, she seemed so innocent in her exuberant happiness that one forgot all her faults in that atmosphere of joy which she diffused around her. And despite her pretty insolence, she had so kind a woman's heart below the surface! When she once saw that she had pained you, she was so soft, so winning, so humble, till she had healed the wound. But then, if she saw she had pleased you too much, the little witch was never easy till she had plagued you again. As heiress to so rich a father, or rather perhaps mother (for the fortune came from

Lady Ellinor), she was naturally surrounded with admirers not wholly disinterested. She did right to plague them; but Me! Poor boy that I was, why should I seem more disinterested than others; how should she perceive all that lay hid in my young deep heart? Was I not in all-worldly pretensions the least worthy of her admirers, and might I not seem, therefore, the most mercenary,--I, who never thought of her fortune, or if that thought did come across me, it was to make me start and turn pale? And then it vanished at her first glance, as a ghost from the dawn. How hard it is to convince youth, that sees all the world of the future before it, and covers that future with golden palaces, of the inequalities of life! In my fantastic and sublime romance I looked out into that Great Beyond, saw myself orator, statesman, minister, ambassador,--Heaven knows what,--laying laurels, which I mistook for rent-rolls, at Fanny's feet.

Whatever Fanny might have discovered as to the state of my heart, it seemed an abyss not worth prying into by either Trevanion or Lady Ellinor. The first, indeed, as may be supposed, was too busy to think of such trifles. And Lady Ellinor treated me as a mere boy,--almost like a boy of her own, she was so kind to me. But she did not notice much the things that lay immediately around her. In brilliant conversation with poets, wits, and statesmen, in sympathy with the toils of her husband or proud schemes for his aggrandizement, Lady Ellinor lived a life of excitement. Those large, eager, shining eyes of hers, bright with some feverish discontent, looked far abroad, as if for new worlds to conquer; the world at her feet escaped from her vision. She loved her daughter, she was proud of her, trusted in her with a superb repose; she did not watch over her. Lady Ellinor stood alone on a mountain and amidst a cloud.

CHAPTER II.

One day the Trevanions had all gone into the country on a visit to a retired minister distantly related to Lady Ellinor, and who was one of the few persons Trevanion himself condescended to consult. I had almost a holiday. I went to call on Sir Sedley Beaudesert. I had always longed to sound him on one subject, and had never dared. This time I resolved to pluck up courage.

"Ah, my young friend!" said he, rising from the contemplation of a villanous picture by a young artist, which he had just benevolently purchased, "I was thinking of you this morning.--Wait a moment, Summers [this to the valet]. Be so good as to take this picture; let it be packed up and go down into the country. It is a sort of picture," he added, turning to me, "that requires a large house. I have an old gallery with little casements that let in no light. It is astonishing how convenient I have found it!" As soon as the picture was gone, Sir Sedley drew a long breath, as if relieved, and resumed more gayly,--

"Yes, I was thinking of you; and if you will forgive any interference in your affairs,--from your father's old friend,--I should be greatly honored by your permission to ask Trevanion what he supposes is to be the ultimate benefit of the horrible labor he inflicts upon you."

"But, my dear Sir Sedley, I like the labors; I am perfectly contented."

"Not to remain always secretary to one who, if there were no business to be done among men, would set about teaching the ants to build hills upon better architectural principles! My dear sir, Trevanion is an awful man, a stupendous man, one catches fatigue if one is in the same room with him three minutes! At your age,--an age that ought to be so happy,"--continued Sir Sedley, with a compassion perfectly angelically "it is sad to see so little enjoyment!"

"But, Sir Sedley, I assure you that you are mistaken, I thoroughly enjoy myself; and have I not heard even you confess that one may be idle and not happy?"

"I did not confess that till I was on the wrong side of forty!" said Sir Sedley, with a slight shade on his brow. "Nobody would ever think you were on the wrong side of forty!" said I, with artful flattery, winding into my subject. "Miss Trevanion, for instance?"

I paused. Sir Sedley looked hard at me, from his bright dark-blue eyes. "Well, Miss Trevanion for instance?"

"Miss Trevanion, who has all the best-looking fellows in London round her, evidently prefers you to any of them."

I said this with a great gulp. I was obstinately bent on plumbing the depth of my own fears.

Sir Sedley rose; he laid his hand kindly on mine, and said, "Do not let Fanny Trevanion torment you even more than her father does!"

"I don't understand you, Sir Sedley."

"But if I understand you, that is more to the purpose. A girl like Miss Trevanion is cruel till she discovers she has a heart. It is not safe to risk one's own with any woman till she has ceased to be a coquette. My dear young friend, if you took life less in earnest, I should spare you the pain of these hints. Some men sow flowers, some plant trees: you are planting a tree under which you will soon find that no flower will grow. Well and good, if the tree could last to bear fruit and give shade; but beware lest you have to tear it up one day or other; for then--What then? Why, you will find your whole life plucked away with its roots!"

Sir Sedley said these last words with so serious an emphasis that I was startled from the confusion I had felt at the former part of his address. He paused long, tapped his snuff-box, inhaled a pinch slowly, and continued, with his more accustomed sprightliness,--

"Go as much as you can into the world. Again I say, 'Enjoy yourself.' And again I ask, what is all this labor to do for you? On some men, far less eminent than Trevanion, it would impose a duty to aid you in a practical career, to secure you a public employment; not so on him. He would not mortgage an inch of his independence by asking a favor from a minister. He so thinks occupation the delight of life that he occupies you out of pure affection. He does not trouble his head about your future. He supposes your father will provide for that, and does not consider that meanwhile your work leads to nothing! Think over all this. I have now bored you enough."

I was bewildered; I was dumb. These practical men of the world, how they take us by surprise! Here had I come to sound Sir Sedley, and here was I plumed, gauged, measured, turned inside out, without having got an inch beyond the surface of that smiling, debonnaire, unruffled ease. Yet, with his invariable delicacy, in spite of all this horrible frankness, Sir Sedley had not said a word to wound what he might think the more sensitive part of my amour propre,--not a word as to the inadequacy of my pretensions to think seriously of Fanny Trevanion. Had we been the Celadon and Chloe of a country village, he could not have regarded us as more equal, so far as the world went. And for the rest, he rather insinuated that poor Fanny, the great heiress, was not worthy of me, than that I was not worthy of Fanny.

I felt that there was no wisdom in stammering and blushing out denials and equivocations; so I stretched my hand to Sir Sedley, took up my hat, and went. Instinctively I bent my way to my father's house. I had not been there for many days. Not only had I had a great deal to do in the way of business, but I am ashamed to say that pleasure itself had so entangled my leisure hours, and Miss Trevanion especially so absorbed them, that, without even uneasy foreboding, I had left my father fluttering his wings more feebly and feebly in the web of Uncle Jack. When I arrived in Russell Street I found the fly and the spider cheek-by-jowl together. Uncle Jack sprang up at my entrance and cried, "Congratulate your father. Congratulate him!--no; congratulate the world!"

"What, uncle!" said I, with a dismal effort at sympathizing liveliness, "is the 'Literary Times' launched at last?"

"Oh! that is all settled,--settled long since. Here's a specimen of the type we have chosen for the leaders." And Uncle Jack, whose pocket was never without a wet sheet of some kind or other, drew forth a steaming papyrus monster, which in point of size was to the political "Times" as a mammoth may be to an elephant. "That is all settled. We are only preparing our contributors, and shall put out our programme next week or the week after. No, Pisistratus, I mean the Great Work."

"My dear father, I am so glad. What! it is really sold, then?"

"Hum!" said my father.

"Sold!" burst forth Uncle Jack. "Sold,--no, sir, we would not sell it! No; if all the booksellers fell down on their knees to us, as they will some day, that book should not be sold! Sir, that book is a revolution; it is an era; it is the emancipator of genius from mercenary thralldom,--That Book!"

I looked inquiringly from uncle to father, and mentally retracted my congratulations. Then Mr. Caxton, slightly blushing, and shyly rubbing his spectacles, said, "You see, Pisistratus, that though poor Jack has devoted uncommon pains to induce the publishers to recognize the merit he has discovered in the 'History of Human Error,' he has failed to do so."

"Not a bit of it; they all acknowledge its miraculous learning, its--"

"Very true; but they don't think it will sell, and therefore most selfishly refuse to buy it. One bookseller, indeed, offered to treat for it if I would leave out all about the Hottentots and Caffres, the

Greek philosophers and Egyptian priests, and confining myself solely to polite society, entitle the work 'Anecdotes of the Courts of Europe, Ancient and Modern.'"

"The--wretch!" groaned Uncle Jack.

"Another thought it might be cut up into little essays, leaving out the quotations, entitled 'Men and Manners.' A third was kind enough to observe that though this kind of work was quite unsalable, yet, as I appeared to have some historical information, he should be happy to undertake an historical romance from my graphic pen,'--that was the phrase, was it not, Jack?"

Jack was too full to speak.

"Provided I would introduce a proper love-plot, and make it into three volumes post octavo, twenty-three lines in a page, neither more nor less. One honest fellow at last was found who seemed to me a very respectable and indeed enterprising person. And after going through a list of calculations, which showed that no possible profit could arise, he generously offered to give me half of those no-profits, provided I would guarantee half the very visible expenses. I was just meditating the prudence of accepting this proposal, when your uncle was seized with a sublime idea, which has whisked up my book in a whirlwind of expectation."

"And that idea?" said I, despondently.

"That idea," quoth Uncle Jack, recovering himself, "is simply and shortly this. From time immemorial, authors have been the prey of the publishers. Sir, authors have lived in garrets, nay, have been choked in the street by an unexpected crumb of bread, like the man who wrote the play, poor fellow!"

"Otway," said my father. "The story is not true,--no matter."

"Milton, sir, as everybody knows, sold 'Paradise Lost' for ten pounds,--ten pounds, Sir! In short, instances of a like nature are too numerous to quote.--But the booksellers, sir, they are leviathans; they roll in seas of gold; they subsist upon authors as vampires upon little children. But at last endurance has reached its limit; the fiat has gone forth; the tocsin of liberty has resounded: authors have burst their fetters. And we have just inaugurated the institution of 'The Grand Anti-Publisher Confederate Authors' Society,' by which, Pisistratus, by which, mark you, every author is to be his own publisher; that is, every author who joins the society. No more submission of immortal works to mercenary calculators, to sordid tastes; no more hard bargains and broken hearts; no more crumbs of bread choking great tragic poets in the streets; no more Paradises Lost sold at L10 a-piece! The author brings his book to a select committee appointed for the purpose,--men of delicacy, education, and refinement, authors themselves; they read it, the society publish; and after a modest deduction, which goes towards the funds of the society, the treasurer hands over the profits to the author."

"So that, in fact, uncle, every author who can't find a publisher anywhere else will of course come to the society. The fraternity will be numerous."

"It will indeed."

"And the speculation--ruinous."

"Ruinous, why?"

"Because in all mercantile negotiations it is ruinous to invest capital in supplies which fail of demand. You undertake to publish books that booksellers will not publish: why? Because booksellers can't sell them. It's just probable that you'll not sell them any better than the booksellers. Ergo, the more your business, the larger your deficit; and the more numerous your society, the more disastrous your condition. Q. E. D."

"Pooh! The select committee will decide what books are to be published."

"Then where the deuce is the advantage to the authors? I would as lief submit; my work to a publisher as I would to a select committee of authors. At all events, the publisher is not my rival; and I suspect he is the best judge, after all, of a book,--as an accoucheur ought to be of a baby."

"Upon my word, nephew, you pay a bad compliment to your father's Great Work, which the booksellers will have nothing to do with."

That was artfully said, and I was posed; when Mr. Caxton observed, with an apologetic smile,--

"The fact is, my dear Pisistratus, that I want my book published without diminishing the little fortune I keep for you some day. Uncle Jack starts a society so to publish it. Health and long life to Uncle Jack's society! One can't look a gift horse in the mouth."

Here my mother entered, rosy from a shopping expedition with Mrs. Primmins; and in her joy at hearing that I could stay to dinner, all else was forgotten. By a wonder, which I did not regret, Uncle Jack really was engaged to dine out. He had other irons in the fire besides the "Literary Times" and the "Confederate Authors' Society;" he was deep in a scheme for making house-tops of felt (which, under other hands, has, I believe, since succeeded); and he had found a rich man (I suppose a hatter) who seemed well inclined to the project, and had actually asked him to dine and expound his views.

CHAPTER III.

Here we three are seated round the open window--after dinner--familiar as in the old happy time--and my mother is talking low, that she may not disturb my father, who seems in thought--

Cr-cr-crrr-cr-cr! I feel it--I have it. Where! What! Where! Knock it down; brush it off! For Heaven's sake, see to it! Crrrr-crrrrr--there--here--in my hair--in my sleeve--in my ear--cr-cr.

I say solemnly, and on the word of a Christian, that as I sat down to

begin this chapter, being somewhat in a brown study, the pen insensibly slipped from my hand, and leaning back in my chair, I fell to gazing in the fire. It is the end of June, and a remarkably cold evening, even for that time of year. And while I was so gazing I felt something crawling just by the nape of the neck, ma'am. Instinctively and mechanically, and still musing, I put my hand there, and drew forth What? That what it is which perplexes me. It was a thing--a dark thing--a much bigger thing than I had expected. And the sight took me so by surprise that I gave my hand a violent shake, and the thing went--where I know not. The what and the where are the knotty points in the whole question! No sooner had it gone than I was seized with repentance not to have examined it more closely; not to have ascertained what the creature was. It might have been an earwig,--a very large, motherly earwig; an earwig far gone in that way in which earwigs wish to be who love their lords. I have a profound horror of earwigs; I firmly believe that they do get into the ear. That is a subject on which it is useless to argue with me upon philosophical grounds. I have a vivid recollection of a story told me by Mrs. Primmins,--how a lady for many years suffered under the most excruciating headaches; how, as the tombstones say, "physicians were in vain;" how she died; and how her head was opened, and how such a nest of earwigs, ma'am, such a nest! Earwigs are the prolifickest things, and so fond of their offspring! They sit on their eggs like hens, and the young, as soon as they are born, creep under them for protection,--quite touchingly! Imagine such an establishment domesticated at one's tympanum!

But the creature was certainly larger than an earwig. It might have been one of that genus in the family of Forficulidce called Labidoura,--monsters whose antennae have thirty joints! There is a species of this creature in England--but to the great grief of naturalists, and to the great honor of Providence, very rarely found--infinitely larger than the common earwig, or Forfaculida auriculana. Could it have been an early hornet? It had certainly a black head and great feelers. I have a greater horror of hornets, if possible, than I have of earwigs. Two hornets will kill a man, and three a carriage-horse sixteen hands high. However, the creature was gone. Yes, but where? Where had I so rashly thrown it? It might have got into a fold of my dressing-gown or into my slippers, or, in short, anywhere, in the various recesses for earwigs and hornets which a gentleman's habiliments afford. I satisfy myself at last as far as I can, seeing that I am not alone in the room, that it is not upon me. I look upon the carpet, the rug, the chair under the fender. It is non inventus. I barbarously hope it is frizzling behind that great black coal in the grate. I pluck up courage; I prudently remove to the other end of the room. I take up my pen, I begin my chapter,--very nicely, too, I think upon the whole. I am just getting into my subject, when--cr-cr-er-cr-er--crawl--crawl--crawl--creep--creep--creep. Exactly, my dear ma'am, in the same place it was before! Oh, by the Powers! I forgot all my scientific regrets at not having scrutinized its genus before, whether Forfaculida or Labidoura. I made a desperate lunge with both hands,--something between thrust and cut, ma'am. The beast is gone. Yes, but, again, where? I say that where is a very horrible question. Having come twice, in spite of all my precautions--and exactly on the same spot, too--it shows a confirmed disposition to habituate itself to its quarters, to effect a parochial settlement upon me; there is something awful and preternatural in it. I assure you that there is not a part of me that has not gone cr-cr-cr!--that has not crept, crawled, and forficulated ever since; and I put it to you what sort of a chapter I can make after such a--My good little girl, will you just take the candle and look carefully under the table?

that's a dear! Yes, my love, very black indeed, with two horns, and inclined to be corpulent. Gentlemen and ladies who have cultivated an acquaintance with the Phoenician language are aware that Beelzebub, examined etymologically and entomologically, is nothing more nor less than Baalzebub, "the Jupiter-fly," an emblem of the Destroying Attribute, which attribute, indeed, is found in all the insect tribes more or less. Wherefore, as--Mr. Payne Knight, in his "Inquiry into Symbolical Languages," hath observed, the Egyptian priests shaved their whole bodies, even to their eyebrows, lest unaware they should harbor any of the minor Zebubs of the great Baal. If I were the least bit more persuaded that that black cr-cr were about me still, and that the sacrifice of my eyebrows would deprive him of shelter, by the souls of the Ptolemies I would,--and I will too! Icing the bell, my little dear! John, my--my cigar-box! There is not a cr in the world that can abide the fumes of the havana! Pshaw! sir, I am not the only man who lets his first thoughts upon cold steel end, like this chapter, in--Pff--pff--pff!

CHAPTER IV.

Everything in this world is of use, even a black thing crawling over the nape of one's neck! Grim unknown, I shall make of thee--a simile!

I think, ma'am, you will allow that if an incident such as I have described had befallen yourself, and you had a proper and lady-like horror of earwigs (however motherly and fond of their offspring), and also of early hornets,--and indeed of all unknown things of the insect tribe with black heads and two great horns, or feelers, or forceps, just by your ear,--I think, ma'am, you will allow that you would find it difficult to settle back to your former placidity of mood and innocent stitch-work. You would feel a something that grated on your nerves and cr'd-cr'd "all over you like," as the children say. And the worst is, that you would be ashamed to say it. You would feel obliged to look pleased and join in the conversation, and not fidget too much, nor always be shaking your flounces and looking into a dark corner of your apron. Thus it is with many other things in life besides black insects. One has a secret care, an abstraction, a something between the memory and the feeling, of a dark crawling cr which one has never dared to analyze. So I sat by my another, trying to smile and talk as in the old time, but longing to move about, and look around, and escape to my own solitude, and take the clothes off my mind, and see what it was that had so troubled and terrified me; for trouble and terror were upon me. And my mother, who was always (Heaven bless her!) inquisitive enough in all that concerned her darling Anachronism, was especially inquisitive that evening. She made me say where I had been, and what I had done, and how I had spent my time; and Fanny Trevanion (whom she had seen, by the way, three or four times, and whom she thought the prettiest person in the world), oh, she must know exactly what I thought of Fanny Trevanion!

And all this while my father seemed in thought; and so, with my arm over my mother's chair, and my hand in hers, I answered my mother's questions, sometimes by a stammer, sometimes by a violent effort at volubility; when at some interrogatory that went tingling right to my heart I turned uneasily, and there were my father's eyes fixed on mine, fixed as they had been when, and none knew why, I pined and languished,

and my father said, "He must go to school;" fixed with quiet, watchful tenderness. Ah, no! his thoughts had not been on the Great Work; he had been deep in the pages of that less worthy one for which he had yet more an author's paternal care. I met those eyes and yearned to throw myself on his heart and tell him all. Tell him what? Ma'am, I no more knew what to tell him than I know what that black thing was which has so worried me all this blessed evening!

"Pisistratus," said my father, softly, "I fear you have forgotten the saffron bag."

"No, indeed, sir," said I, smiling.

"He," resumed my father, "he who wears the saffron bag has more cheerful, settled spirits than you seem to have, my poor boy."

"My dear Austin, his spirits are very good, I think," said my mother, anxiously.

My father shook his head; then he took two or three turns about the room.

"Shall I ring for candles, sir? It is getting dark; you will wish to read."

"No, Pisistratus, it is you who shall read; and this hour of twilight best suits the book I am about to open to you."

So saying, he drew a chair between me and my mother and seated himself gravely, looking down a long time in silence, then turning his eyes to each of us alternately.

"My dear wife," said he, at length, almost solemnly, "I am going to speak of myself as I was before I knew you."

Even in the twilight I saw that my mother's countenance changed.

"You have respected my secrets, Katherine, tenderly, honestly. Now the time is come when I can tell them to you and to our son."

CHAPTER V.

MY FATHER'S FIRST LOVE.

"I lost my mother early; my father--a good man, but who was so indolent that he rarely stirred from his chair, and who often passed whole days without speaking, like an Indian dervish--left Roland and myself to educate ourselves much according to our own tastes. Roland shot and hunted and fished, read all the poetry and books of chivalry to be found in my father's collection, which was rich in such matters, and made a great many copies of the old pedigree,--the only thing in which my father ever evinced much vital interest. Early in life I conceived a passion for graver studios, and by good luck I found a tutor in Mr. Tibbets, who, but for his modesty, Kitty, would have rivalled Porson. He was a second Budaeus for industry,--and, by the way, he said exactly

the same thing that Budmus did, namely, 'That the only lost day in his life was that in which he was married; for on that day he had only had six hours for reading!' Under such a master I could not fail to be a scholar. I came from the university with such distinction as led me to look sanguinely on my career in the world.

"I returned to my father's quiet rectory to pause and consider what path I should take to faire. The rectory was just at the foot of the hill, on the brow of which were the ruins of the castle Roland has since purchased. And though I did not feel for the ruins the same romantic veneration as my dear brother (for my day-dreams were more colored by classic than feudal recollections), I yet loved to climb the hill, book in hand, and build my castles in the air midst the wrecks of that which time had shattered on the earth.

"One day, entering the old weed-grown court, I saw a lady seated on my favorite spot, sketching the ruins. The lady was young, more beautiful than any woman I had yet seen,--at least to my eyes. In a word, I was fascinated, and as the trite phrase goes, 'spell-bound.' I seated myself at a little distance, and contemplated her without desiring to speak. By and by, from another part of the ruins, which were then uninhabited, came a tall, imposing elderly gentleman with a benignant aspect, and a little dog. The dog ran up to me barking. This drew the attention of both lady and gentleman to me. The gentleman approached, called off the dog, and apologized with much politeness. Surveying me somewhat curiously, he then began to ask questions about the old place and the family it had belonged to, with the name and antecedents of which he was well acquainted. By degrees it came out that I was the descendant of that family, and the younger son of the humble rector who was now its representative. The gentleman then introduced himself to me as the Earl of Rainsforth, the principal proprietor in the neighborhood, but who had so rarely visited the country during my childhood and earlier youth that I had never before seen him. His only son, however, a young man of great promise, had been at the same college with me in my first year at the University. The young lord was a reading man and a scholar, and we had become slightly acquainted when he left for his travels.

"Now, on hearing my name Lord Rainsforth took my hand cordially, and leading me to his daughter, said, 'Think, Ellinor, how fortunate!--this is the Mr. Caxton whom your brother so often spoke of.'

"In short, my dear Pisistratus, the ice was broken, the acquaintance made; and Lord Rainsforth, saying he was come to atone for his long absence from the county, and to reside at Compton the greater part of the year, pressed me to visit him. I did so. Lord Rainsforth's liking to me increased; I went there often."

My father paused, and seeing my mother had fixed her eyes upon him with a sort of mournful earnestness, and had pressed her hands very tightly together, he bent down and kissed her forehead.

"There is no cause, my child!" said he. It was the only time I ever heard him address my mother so parentally. But then I never heard him before so grave and solemn,--not a quotation, too; it was incredible: it was not my father speaking, it was another man. "Yes, I went there often. Lord Rainsforth was a remarkable person. Shyness that was wholly without pride (which is rare), and a love for quiet literary pursuits, had prevented his taking that personal part in public life for

which he was richly qualified; but his reputation for sense and honor, and his personal popularity, had given him no inconsiderable influence even, I believe, in the formation of cabinets, and he had once been prevailed upon to fill a high diplomatic situation abroad, in which I have no doubt that he was as miserable as a good man can be under any infliction. He was now pleased to retire from the world, and look at it through the loopholes of retreat. Lord Rainsforth had a great respect for talent, and a warm interest in such of the young as seemed to him to possess it. By talent, indeed, his family had risen, and were strikingly characterized. His ancestor, the first peer, had been a distinguished lawyer; his father had been celebrated for scientific attainments; his children, Ellinor and Lord Pendarvis, were highly accomplished. Thus the family identified themselves with the aristocracy of intellect, and seemed unconscious of their claims to the lower aristocracy of rank. You must bear this in mind throughout my story.

"Lady Ellinor shared her father's tastes and habits of thought (she was not then an heiress). Lord Rainsforth talked to me of my career. It was a time when the French Revolution had made statesmen look round with some anxiety to strengthen the existing order of things, by alliance with all in the rising generation who evinced such ability as might influence their contemporaries.

"University distinction is, or was formerly, among the popular passports to public life. By degrees, Lord Rainsforth liked me so well as to suggest to me a seat in the House of Commons. A member of Parliament might rise to anything, and Lord Rainsforth had sufficient influence to effect my return. Dazzling prospect this to a young scholar fresh from Thucydides, and with Demosthenes fresh at his tongue's end! My dear boy, I was not then, you see, quite what I am now: in a word, I loved Ellinor Compton, and therefore I was ambitious. You know how ambitious she is still. But I could not mould my ambition to hers. I could not contemplate entering the senate of my country as a dependent on a party or a patron,--as a man who must make his fortune there; as a man who, in every vote, must consider how much nearer he advanced himself to emolument. I was not even certain that Lord Rainsforth's views on politics were the same as mine would be. How could the politics of an experienced man of the world be those of an ardent young student? But had they been identical, I felt that I could not so creep into equality with a patron's daughter. No! I was ready to abandon my own more scholastic predilections, to strain every energy at the Bar, to carve or force my own way to fortune; and if I arrived at independence, then,--what then? Why, the right to speak and aim at power. This was not the view of Ellinor Compton. The law seemed to her a tedious, needless drudgery; there was nothing in it to captivate her imagination. She listened to me with that charm which she yet retains, and by which she seems to identify herself with those who speak to her. She would turn to me with a pleading look when her father 'dilated on the brilliant prospects of a parliamentary success; for he (not having gained it, yet having lived with those who had) overvalued it, and seemed ever to wish to enjoy it through some other. But when I, in turn, spoke of independence, of the Bar, Ellinor's face grew overcast. The world,--the world was with her, and the ambition of the world, which is always for power or effect! A part of the house lay exposed to the east wind. 'Plant half-way down the hill,' said I one day. 'Plant!' cried Lady Ellinor,--'it will be twenty years before the trees grow up. No, my dear father, build a wall and cover it with creepers!' That was an illustration of her whole character. She could not wait till trees

had time to grow; a dead wall would be so much more quickly thrown up, and parasite creepers would give it a prettier effect. Nevertheless, she was a grand and noble creature. And I--in love! Not so discouraged as you may suppose; for Lord Rainsforth often hinted encouragement which even I could scarcely misconstrue. Not caring for rank, and not wishing for fortune beyond competence for his daughter, he saw in me all he required,--a gentleman of ancient birth, and one in whom his own active mind could prosecute that kind of mental ambition which overflowed in him, and yet had never had its vent. And Ellinor!--Heaven forbid I should say she loved me, but something made me think she could do so. Under these notions, suppressing all my hopes, I made a bold effort to master the influences round me and to adopt that career I thought worthiest of us all. I went to London to read for the Bar."

"The Bar! is it possible?" cried I. My father smiled sadly.

"Everything seemed possible to me then. I read some months. I began to see my way even in that short time,--began to comprehend what would be the difficulties before me, and to feel there was that within me which could master them. I took a holiday and returned to Cumberland. I found Roland there on my return. Always of a roving, adventurous temper, though he had not then entered the army, he had, for more than two years, been wandering over Great Britain and Ireland on foot. It was a young knight-errant whom I embraced, and who overwhelmed me with reproaches that I should be reading for the law. There had never been a lawyer in the family! It was about that time, I think, that I petrified him with the discovery of the printer! I knew not exactly wherefore, whether from jealousy, fear, foreboding, but it certainly was a pain that seized me when I learned from Roland that he had become intimate at Compton Hall. Roland and Lord Rainsforth had met at the house of a neighboring gentleman, and Lord Rainsforth had welcomed his acquaintance, at first, perhaps, for my sake, afterwards for his own.

"I could not for the life of me," continued my father, "ask Roland if he admired Ellinor; but when I found that he did not put that question to me, I trembled!

"We went to Compton together, speaking little by the way. We stayed there some days."

My father here thrust his hand into his waistcoat. All men have their little ways, which denote much; and when my father thrust his hand into his waistcoat, it was always a sign of some mental effort,--he was going to prove or to argue, to moralize or to preach. Therefore, though I was listening before with all my ears, I believe I had, speaking magnetically and mesmerically, an extra pair of ears, a new sense supplied to me, when my father put his hand into his waistcoat.

CHAPTER VI.

"There is not a mystical creation, type, symbol, or poetical invention for meanings abstruse, recondite, and incomprehensible which is not represented by the female gender," said my father, having his hand quite buried in his waistcoat. "For instance, the Sphinx and Isis, whose veil no man had ever lifted, were both ladies, Kitty! And so was Persephone,

who must be always either in heaven or hell; and Hecate, who was one thing by night and another by day. The Sibyls were females, and so were the Gorgons, the Harpies, the Furies, the Fates, and the Teutonic Valkyrs, Nornies, and Hela herself; in short, all representations of ideas obscure, inscrutable, and portentous, are nouns feminine."

Heaven bless my father! Augustine Caxton was himself again! I began to fear that the story had slipped away from him, lost in that labyrinth of learning. But luckily, as he paused for breath, his look fell on those limpid blue eyes of my mother, and that honest open brow of hers, which had certainly nothing in common with Sphinxes, Fates, Furies, or Valkyrs; and whether his heart smote him, or his reason made him own that he had fallen into a very disingenuous and unsound train of assertion, I know not, but his front relaxed, and with a smile he resumed: "Ellinor was the last person in the world to deceive any one willingly. Did she deceive me and Roland, that we both, though not conceited men, fancied that, if we had dared to speak openly of love, we had not so dared in vain; or do you think, Kitty, that a woman really can love (not much, perhaps, but somewhat) two or three, or half a dozen, at a time?"

"Impossible!" cried my mother. "And as for this Lady Ellinor, I am shocked at her--I don't know what to call it!"

"Nor I either, my dear," said my father, slowly taking his hand from his waistcoat, as if the effort were too much for him, and the problem were insoluble. "But this, begging your pardon, I do think, that before a young woman does really, truly, and cordially centre her affections on one object, she suffers fancy, imagination, the desire of power, curiosity, or Heaven knows what, to stimulate, even to her own mind, pale reflections of the luminary not yet risen,--parhelia that precede the sun. Don't judge of Roland as you see him now, Pisistratus,--grim, and gray, and formal: imagine a nature soaring high amongst daring thoughts, or exuberant with the nameless poetry of youthful life, with a frame matchless for bounding elasticity, an eye bright with haughty fire, a heart from which noble sentiments sprang like sparks from an anvil. Lady Ellinor had an ardent, inquisitive imagination. This bold, fiery nature must have moved her interest. On the other hand, she had an instructed, full, and eager mind. Am I vain if I say, now after the lapse of so many years, that in my mind her intellect felt companionship? When a woman loves and marries and settles, why then she becomes a one whole, a completed being. But a girl like Ellinor has in her many women. Various herself, all varieties please her. I do believe that if either of us had spoken the word boldly, Lady Ellinor would have shrunk back to her own heart, examined it, tasked it, and given a frank and generous answer; and he who had spoken first might have had the better chance not to receive a 'No.' But neither of us spoke. And perhaps she was rather curious to know if she had made an impression, than anxious to create it. It was not that she willingly deceived us, but her whole atmosphere was delusion. Mists come before the sunrise. However this be, Roland and I were not long in detecting each other. And hence arose, first coldness, then jealousy, then quarrel."

"Oh, my father, your love must have been indeed powerful to have made a breach between the hearts of two such brothers!"

"Yes," said my father, "it was amidst the old ruins of the castle, there where I had first seen Ellinor, that, winding my arm round Roland's neck

as I found--him seated amongst the weeds and stones, his face buried in his hands,--it was there that I said, "Brother, we both love this woman! My nature is the calmer of the two, I shall feel the loss less. Brother, shake hands! and God speed you, for I go!"

"Austin!" murmured my mother, sinking her head on my father's breast.

"And therewith we quarrelled. For it was Roland who insisted, while the tears rolled down his eyes and he stamped his foot on the ground, that he was the intruder, the interloper; that he had no hope; that he had been a fool and a madman; and that it was for him to go! Now, while we were disputing, and words began to run high, my father's old servant entered the desolate place with a note from Lady Ellinor to me, asking for the loan of some book I had praised. Roland saw the handwriting, and while I turned the note over and over irresolutely, before I broke the seal, he vanished.

"He did not return to my father's house. We did not know what had become of him. But I, thinking over that impulsive, volcanic nature, took quick alarm. And I went in search of him; came on his track at last; and after many days found him in a miserable cottage amongst the most dreary of the dreary wastes which form so large a part of Cumberland. He was so altered I scarcely knew him. To be brief, we came at last to a compromise. We would go back to Compton. This suspense was intolerable. One of us at least should take courage and learn his fate. But who should speak first? We drew lots, and the lot fell on me.

"And now that I was really to pass the Rubicon, now that I was to impart that secret hope which had animated me so long, been to me a new life, what were my sensations? My dear boy, depend on it that that age is the happiest when such feelings as I felt then can agitate us no more; they are mistakes in the serene order of that majestic life which Heaven meant for thoughtful man. Our souls should be as stars on earth, not as meteors and tortured comets. What could I offer to Ellinor, to her father? What but a future of patient labor? And in either answer what alternative of misery,--my own existence shattered, or Roland's noble heart!

"Well, we went to Compton. In our former visits we had been almost the only guests. Lord Rainsforth did not much affect the intercourse of country squires, less educated than now; and in excuse for Ellinor and for us, we were almost the only men of our own age she had seen in that large dull house. But now the London season had broken up, the house was filled; there was no longer that familiar and constant approach to the mistress of the Hall which had made us like one family. Great ladies, fine people were round her; a look, a smile, a passing word were as much as I had a right to expect. And the talk, too, how different! Before I could speak on books,--I was at home there! Roland could pour forth his dreams, his chivalrous love for the past, his bold defiance of the unknown future. And Ellinor, cultivated and fanciful, could sympathize with both. And her father, scholar and gentleman, could sympathize too. But now--"

CHAPTER VII.

"It is no use in the world," said my father, "to know all the languages expounded in grammars and splintered up into lexicons, if we don't learn the language of the world. It is a talk apart, Kitty," cried my father, warming up. "It is an Anaglyph,--a spoken anaglyph, my dear! If all the hieroglyphs of the Egyptians had been A B C to you, still, if you did not know the anaglyph, you would know nothing of the true mysteries of the priests. (1)

"Neither Roland nor I knew one symbol letter of the anaglyph. Talk, talk, talk on persons we never heard of, things we never cared for. All we thought of importance, puerile or pedantic trifles; all we thought so trite and childish, the grand momentous business of life! If you found a little schoolboy on his half-holiday fishing for minnows with a crooked pin, and you began to tell him of all the wonders of the deep, the laws of the tides, and the antediluvian relics of iguanodon and ichthyosaurus; nay, if you spoke but of pearl fisheries and coral-banks, or water-kelpies and naiads,--would not the little boy cry out peevishly, 'Don't tease me with all that nonsense; let me fish in peace for my minnows!' I think the little boy is right after his own way: it was to fish for minnows that he came out, poor child, not to hear about iguanodons and water-kelpies.

"So the company fished for minnows, and not a word could we say about our pearl-fisheries and coral-banks! And as for fishing for minnows ourselves, my dear boy, we should have been less bewildered if you had asked us to fish for a mermaid! Do you see, now, one reason why I have let you go thus early into the world? Well, but amongst these minnow-fishers there was one who fished with an air that made the minnows look larger than salmons.

"Trevanion had been at Cambridge with me. We were even intimate. He was a young man like myself, with his way to make in the world. Poor as I, of a family upon a par with mine, old enough, but decayed. There was, however, this difference between us: he had connections in the great world; I had none. Like me, his chief pecuniary resource was a college fellowship. Now, Trevanion had established a high reputation at the University; but less as a scholar, though a pretty fair one, than as a man to rise in life. Every faculty he had was an energy. He aimed at everything: lost some things, gained others. He was a great speaker in a debating society, a member of some politico-economical club. He was an eternal talker,--brilliant, various, paradoxical, florid; different from what he is now, for, dreading fancy, his career since has been one effort to curb it. But all his mind attached itself to something that we Englishmen call solid; it was a large mind,--not, my dear Kitty, like a fine whale sailing through knowledge from the pleasure of sailing, but like a polypus, that puts forth all its feelers for the purpose of catching hold of something. Trevanion had gone at once to London from the University; his reputation and his talk dazzled his connections, not unjustly. They made an effort, they got him into Parliament; he had spoken, he had succeeded. He came to Compton in the flush of his virgin fame. I cannot convey to you who know him now--with his careworn face and abrupt, dry manner, reduced by perpetual gladiatorship to the skin and bone of his former self--what that man was when he first stepped into the arena of life.

"You see, my listeners, that you have to recollect that we middle-aged folks were young then; that is to say, we were as different from what we are now as the green bough of summer is from the dry wood out of which

we make a ship or a gatepost. Neither man nor wood comes to the uses of life till the green leaves are stripped and the sap gone. And then the uses of life transform us into strange things with other names: the tree is a tree no more, it is a gate or a ship; the youth is a youth no more, but a one-legged soldier, a hollow-eyed statesman, a scholar spectacled and slipped! When Micyllus"--here the hand slides into the waistcoat again--"when Micyllus," said my father, "asked the cock that had once been Pythagoras(2) if the affair of Troy was really as Homer told it, the cock replied scornfully, 'How could Homer know anything about it? At that time he was a camel in Bactria.' Pistratus, according to the doctrine of metempsychosis you might have been a Bactrian camel when that which to my life was the siege of Troy saw Roland and Trevanion before the walls.

"Handsome you can see that Trevanion has been: but the beauty of his countenance then was in its perpetual play, its intellectual eagerness; and his conversation was so discursive, so various, so animated, and above all so full of the things of the day! If he had been a priest of Serapis for fifty years he could not have known the anaglyph better. Therefore he filled up every crevice and pore of that hollow society with his broken, inquisitive, petulant light; therefore he was admired, talked of, listened to, and everybody said, 'Trevanion is a rising man.'

"Yet I did not do him then the justice I have done since; for we students and abstract thinkers are apt too much, in our first youth, to look to the depth, of a man's mind or knowledge, and not enough to the surface it may cover. There may be more water in a flowing stream only four feet deep, and certainly more force and more health, than in a sullen pool thirty yards to the bottom. I did not do Trevanion justice; I did not see how naturally he realized Lady Ellinor's ideal. I have said that she was like many women in one. Trevanion was a thousand men in one. He had learning to please her mind, eloquence to dazzle her fancy, beauty to please her eye, reputation precisely of the kind to allure her vanity, honor and conscientious purpose to satisfy her judgment; and, above all, he was ambitious,--ambitious not as I, not as Roland was, but ambitious as Ellinor was; ambitious, not to realize some grand ideal in the silent heart, but to grasp the practical, positive substances that lay without.

"Ellinor was a child of the great world, and so was he.

"I saw not all this, nor did Roland; and Trevanion seemed to pay no particular court to Ellinor.

"But the time approached when I ought to speak. The house began to thin. Lord Rainsforth had leisure to resume his easy conferences with me; and one day, walking in his garden, he gave me the opportunity,--for I need not say, Pistratus," said my father, looking at me earnestly, "that before any man of honor, if of inferior worldly pretensions, will open his heart seriously to the daughter, it is his duty to speak first to the parent, whose confidence has imposed that trust." I bowed my head and colored.

"I know not how it was," continued my father, "but Lord Rainsforth turned the conversation on Ellinor. After speaking of his expectations in his son, who was returning home, he said, 'But he will of course enter public life,--will, I trust, soon marry, have a separate establishment, and I shall see but little of him. My Ellinor! I cannot bear the thought of parting wholly with her. And that, to say the

selfish truth, is one reason why I have never wished her to marry a rich man, and so leave me forever. I could hope that she will give herself to one who may be contented to reside at least great part of the year with me, who may bless me with another son, not steal from me a daughter. I do not mean that he should waste his life in the country; his occupations would probably lead him to London. I care not where my house is,--all I want is to keep my home. You know,' he added, with a smile that I thought meaning, 'how often I have implied to you that I have no vulgar ambition for Ellinor. Her portion must be very small, for my estate is strictly entailed, and I have lived too much up to my income all my life to hope to save much now. But her tastes do not require expense, and while I live, at least, there need be no change. She can only prefer a man whose talents, congenial to hers, will win their own career, and ere I die that career may be made.' Lord Rainsforth paused; and then--how, in what words I know not, but out all burst!--my long-suppressed, timid, anxious, doubtful, fearful love. The strange energy it had given to a nature till then so retiring and calm! My recent devotion to the law; my confidence that, with such a prize, I could succeed,--it was but a transfer of labor from one study to another. Labor could conquer all things, and custom sweeten them in the conquest. The Bar was a less brilliant career than the senate. But the first aim of the poor man should be independence. In short, Pisistratus, wretched egotist that I was, I forgot Roland in that moment; and I spoke as one who felt his life was in his words.

"Lord Rainsforth looked at me, when I had done, with a countenance full of affection, but it was not cheerful.

"My dear Caxton,' said he, tremulously, 'I own that I once wished this,--wished it from the hour I knew you; but why did you so long--I never suspected that--nor, I am sure, did Ellinor.' He stopped short, and added quickly: 'However, go and speak, as you have spoken to me, to Ellinor. Go; it may not yet be too late. And yet--but go.'

"Too late!--what meant those words? Lord Rainsforth had turned hastily down another walk, and left me alone, to ponder over an answer which concealed a riddle. Slowly I took my way towards the house and sought Lady Ellinor, half hoping, half dreading to find her alone. There was a little room communicating with a conservatory, where she usually sat in the morning. Thither I took my course. "That room,--I see it still!--the walls covered with pictures from her own hand, many were sketches of the haunts we had visited together; the simple ornaments, womanly but not effeminate; the very books on the table, that had been made familiar by dear associations. Yes, there the Tasso, in which we had read together the episode of Clorinda; there the Aeschylus in which I translated to her the "Prometheus." Pedantries these might seem to some, pedantries, perhaps, they were; but they were proofs of that congeniality which had knit the man of books to the daughter of the world. That room, it was the home of my heart.

"Such, in my vanity of spirit, methought would be the air round a home to come. I looked about me, troubled and confused, and, halting timidly, I saw Ellinor before me, leaning her face on her hand, her cheek more flushed than usual, and tears in her eyes. I approached in silence, and as I drew my chair to the table, my eye fell on a glove on the floor. It was a man's glove. Do you know," said my father, "that once, when I was very young, I saw a Dutch picture called 'The Glove,' and the subject was of murder? There was a weed-grown, marshy pool, a desolate, dismal landscape, that of itself inspired thoughts of ill

deeds and terror. And two men, as if walking by chance, came to this pool; the finger of one pointed to a blood-stained glove, and the eyes of both were fixed on each other, as if there were no need of words. That glove told its tale. The picture had long haunted me in my boyhood, but it never gave me so uneasy and fearful a feeling as did that real glove upon the floor. Why? My dear Pisistratus, the theory of forebodings involves one of those questions on which we may ask 'why' forever. More chilled than I had been in speaking to her father, I took heart at last, and spoke to Ellinor."

My father stopped short; the moon had risen, and was shining full into the room and on his face. And by that light the face was changed; young emotions had brought back youth,--my father looked a young man. But what pain was there! If the memory alone could raise what, after all, was but the ghost of suffering, what had been its living reality! Involuntarily I seized his hand; my father pressed it convulsively, and said with a deep breath: "It was too late; Trevanion was Lady Ellinor's accepted, plighted, happy lover. My dear Katherine, I do not envy him now; look up, sweet wife, look up!"

(1). The anaglyph was peculiar to the Egyptian priests; the hieroglyph generally known to the well educated.

(2). Lucian, The Dream of Micyllus.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Ellinor (let me do her justice) was shocked at my silent emotion. No human lip could utter more tender sympathy, more noble self-reproach; but that was no balm to my wound. So I left the house; so I never returned to the law; so all impetus, all motive for exertion, seemed taken from my being; so I went back into books. And so a moping, despondent, worthless mourner might I have been to the end of my days, but that Heaven, in its mercy, sent thy mother, Pisistratus, across my path; and day and night I bless God and her, for I have been, and am--oh, indeed, I am a happy man!"

My mother threw herself on my father's breast, sobbing violently, and then turned from the room without a word; my father's eye, swimming in tears, followed her; and then, after pacing the room for some moments in silence, he came up to me, and leaning his arm on my shoulder, whispered, "Can you guess why I have now told you all this, my son?"

"Yes, partly: thank you, father," I faltered, and sat down, for I felt faint.

"Some sons," said my father, seating himself beside me, "would find in their father's follies and errors an excuse for their own; not so will you, Pisistratus."

"I see no folly, no error, sir; only nature and sorrow."

"Pause ere you thus think," said my father. "Great was the folly and great the error of indulging imagination that has no basis, of linking the whole usefulness of my life to the will of a human creature like myself. Heaven did not design the passion of love to be this tyrant;

nor is it so with the mass and multitude of human life. We dreamers, solitary students like me, or half-poets like poor Roland, make our own disease. How many years, even after I had regained serenity, as your mother gave me a home long not appreciated, have I wasted! The mainstring of my existence was snapped; I took no note of time. And therefore now, you see, late in life, Nemesis wakes. I look back with regret at powers neglected, opportunities gone. Galvanically I brace up energies half-palsied by disuse; and you see me, rather than rest quiet and good for nothing, talked into what, I dare say, are sad follies, by an Uncle Jack! And now I behold Ellinor again; and I say in wonder: 'All this--all this--all this agony, all this torpor, for that, haggard face, that worldly spirit!' So is it ever in life: mortal things fade; immortal things spring more freshly with every step to the tomb.

"Ah!" continued my father, with a sigh, "it would not have been so if at your age I had found out the secret of the saffron bag!"

CHAPTER IX.

"And Roland, sir," said I, "how did he take it?"

"With all the indignation of a proud, unreasonable man; more indignant, poor fellow, for me than himself. And so did he wound and gall me by what he said of Ellinor, and so did he rage against me because I would not share his rage, that again we quarrelled. We parted, and did not meet for many years. We came into sudden possession of our little fortunes. His he devoted (as you may know) to the purchase of the old ruins and the commission in the army, which had always been his dream; and so went his way, wrathful. My share gave me an excuse for indolence,--it satisfied all my wants; and when my old tutor died, and his young child became my ward, and, somehow or other, from my ward my wife, it allowed me to resign my fellowship and live amongst my books, still as a book myself. One comfort, somewhat before my marriage, I had conceived; and that, too, Roland has since said was comfort to him,--Ellinor became an heiress. Her poor brother died, and all of the estate that did not pass in the male line devolved on her. That fortune made a gulf between us almost as wide as her marriage. For Ellinor poor and portionless, in spite of her rank, I could have worked, striven, slaved; but Ellinor Rich! it would have crushed me. This was a comfort. But still, still the past,--that perpetual aching sense of something that had seemed the essential of life withdrawn from life evermore, evermore! What was left was not sorrow,--it was a void. Had I lived more with men, and less with dreams and books, I should have made my nature large enough to bear the loss of a single passion. But in solitude we shrink up. No plant so much as man needs the sun and the air. I comprehend now why most of our best and wisest men have lived in capitals; and therefore again I say, that one scholar in a family is enough. Confiding in your sound heart and strong honor, I turn you thus betimes on the world. Have I done wrong? Prove that I have not, my child. Do you know what a very good man has said? Listen and follow my precept, not example.

"The state of the world is such, and so much depends on action, that everything seems to say aloud to every man, "Do something--do it--do it!"

I was profoundly touched, and I rose refreshed and hopeful, when suddenly the door opened, and who or what in the world should come in-- But certainly he, she, it, or they shall not come into this chapter! On that point I am resolved. No, my dear young lady, I am extremely flattered, I feel for your curiosity; but really not a peep,--not one! And yet--Well, then, if you will have it, and look so coaxingly--Who or what, I say, should come in abrupt, unexpected--taking away one's breath, not giving one time to say, "By your leave, or with your leave," but making one's mouth stand open with surprise, and one's eyes fix in a big round stupid stare--but--

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