

# The Caxtons, Part 10

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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Author: Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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This eBook was produced by Pat Castevens  
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## PART X.

### CHAPTER I.

My uncle's conjecture as to the parentage of Francis Vivian seemed to me a positive discovery. Nothing more likely than that this wilful boy had formed some headstrong attachment which no father would sanction, and so, thwarted and irritated, thrown himself on the world. Such an explanation was the more agreeable to me as it cleared up much that had appeared discreditable in the mystery that surrounded Vivian. I could never bear to think that he had done anything mean and criminal, however I might believe he had been rash and faulty. It was natural that the unfriended wanderer should have been thrown into a society, the equivocal character of which had failed to revolt the audacity of an inquisitive mind and adventurous temper; but it was natural also that the habits of gentle birth, and that silent education which English gentlemen commonly receive from their very cradle, should have preserved his honor, at least, intact through all. Certainly the pride, the notions, the very faults of the well-born had remained in full force,-- why not the better qualities, however smothered for the time? I felt thankful for the thought that Vivian was returning to an element in which he might repurify his mind, refit himself for that sphere to which he belonged, thankful that we might yet meet, and our present half-intimacy mature, perhaps, into healthful friendship.

It was with such thoughts that I took up my hat the next morning to seek Vivian, and judge if we had gained the right clew, when we were startled by what was a rare sound at our door,--the postman's knock. My father was at the Museum; my mother in high conference, or close preparation for our approaching departure, with Mrs. Primmins; Roland, I, and Blanche had the room to ourselves.

"The letter is not for me," said Pisistratus.

"Nor for me, I am sure," said the Captain, when the servant entered and confuted him,--for the letter was for him. He took it up wonderingly and suspiciously, as Glumdalclitch took up Gulliver, or as (if naturalists) we take up an unknown creature that we are not quite sure will not bite and sting us. Ah! it has stung or bit you, Captain Roland; for you start and change color,--you suppress a cry as you break the seal; you breathe hard as you read; and the letter seems short--but it takes time in the reading, for you go over it again and again. Then you fold it up, crumple it, thrust it into your breast-pocket, and look round like a man waking from a dream. Is it a dream of pain, or of pleasure? Verily, I cannot guess, for nothing is on that eagle face either of pain or pleasure, but rather of fear, agitation, bewilderment. Yet the eyes are bright, too, and there is a smile on that iron lip.

My uncle looked round, I say, and called hastily for his cane and his hat, and then began buttoning his coat across his broad breast, though the day was hot enough to have unbuttoned every breast in the metropolis.

"You are not going out, uncle?"

"Yes, Yes."

"But are you strong enough yet? Let me go with you."

"No, sir; no. Blanche, come here." He took the child in his arms, surveyed her wistfully, and kissed her. "You have never given me pain, Blanche: say, 'God bless and prosper you, father!'"

"God bless and prosper my dear, dear papa!" said Blanche, putting her little hands together, as if in prayer.

"There--that should bring me luck, Blanche," said the Captain, gayly, and setting her down. Then seizing his cane from the servant, and putting on his hat with a determined air, he walked stoutly forth; and I saw him, from the window, march along the streets as cheerfully as if he had been besieging Badajoz.

"God prosper thee too!" said I, involuntarily.

And Blanche took hold of my hand, and said in her prettiest way (and her pretty ways were many), "I wish you would come with us, cousin Sisty, and help me to love papa. Poor papa! he wants us both,--he wants all the love we can give him."

"That he does, my dear Blanche; and I think it a great mistake that we don't all live together. Your papa ought not to go to that tower of his at the world's end, but come to our snug, pretty house, with a garden full of flowers, for you to be Queen of the May,--from May to November; to say nothing of a duck that is more sagacious than any creature in the Fables I gave you the other day."

Blanche laughed and clapped her hands. "Oh, that would be so nice! But"--and she stopped gravely, and added, "but then, you see, there would not be the tower to love papa; and I am sure that the tower must love him very much, for he loves it dearly."

It was my turn to laugh now. "I see how it is, you little witch," said I; "you would coax us to come and live with you and the owls! With all my heart, so far as I am concerned."

"Sisty," said Blanche, with an appalling solemnity on her face, "do you know what I've been thinking?"

"Not I, miss--what? Something very deep, I can see,--very horrible, indeed, I fear; you look so serious."

"Why, I've been thinking," continued Blanche, not relaxing a muscle, and without the least bit of a blush--"I've been thinking that I'll be your little wife; and then, of course, we shall all live together."

Blanche did not blush, but I did. "Ask me that ten years hence, if you dare, you impudent little thing; and now, run away to Mrs. Primmins and tell her to keep you out of mischief, for I must say 'Good morning.'"

But Blanche did not run away, and her dignity seemed exceedingly hurt at my mode of taking her alarming proposition, for she retired into a

corner pouting, and sat down with great majesty. So there I left her, and went my way to Vivian. He was out; but seeing books on his table, and having nothing to do, I resolved to wait for his return. I had enough of my father in me to turn at once to the books for company; and by the side of some graver works which I had recommended, I found certain novels in French that Vivian had got from a circulating library. I had a curiosity to read these; for except the old classic novels of France, this mighty branch of its popular literature was then new to me. I soon got interested; but what an interest!--the interest that a nightmare might excite if one caught it out of one's sleep and set to work to examine it. By the side of what dazzling shrewdness, what deep knowledge of those holes and corners in the human system of which Goethe must have spoken when he said somewhere,--if I recollect right, and don't misquote him, which I'll not answer for "There is something in every man's heart which, if we could know, would make us hate him,"--by the side of all this, and of much more that showed prodigious boldness and energy of intellect, what strange exaggeration; what mock nobility of sentiment; what inconceivable perversion of reasoning; what damnable demoralization! The true artist, whether in Romance or the Drama, will often necessarily interest us in a vicious or criminal character; but he does not the less leave clear to our reprobation the vice or the crime. But here I found myself called upon, not only to feel interest in the villain (which would be perfectly allowable,--I am very much interested in Macbeth and Lovelace), but to admire and sympathize with the villainy itself. Nor was it the confusion of all wrong and right in individual character that shocked me the most, but rather the view of society altogether, painted in colors so hideous that, if true, instead of a revolution, it would draw down a deluge. It was the hatred, carefully instilled, of the poor against the rich; it was the war breathed between class and class; it was that envy of all superiorities which loves to show itself by allowing virtue only to a blouse, and asserting; that a man must be a rogue if he belong to that rank of society in which, from the very gifts of education, from the necessary associations of circumstance, roguery is the last thing probable or natural. It was all this, and things a thousand times worse, that set my head in a whirl, as hour after hour slipped on, and I still gazed, spell-bound, on these Chimeras and Typhons,--these symbols of the Destroying Principle. "Poor Vivian!" said I, as I rose at last; "if thou readest these books with pleasure or from habit, no wonder that thou seemest to me so obtuse about right and wrong, and to have a great cavity where thy brain should have the bump of 'conscientiousness' in full salience!"

Nevertheless, to do those demoniacs justice, I had got through time imperceptibly by their pestilent help; and I was startled to see, by my watch, how late it was. I had just resolved to leave a line fixing an appointment for the morrow, and so depart, when I heard Vivian's knock, --a knock that had great character in it, haughty, impatient, irregular; not a neat, symmetrical, harmonious, unpretending knock, but a knock that seemed to set the whole house and street at defiance: it was a knock bullying--a knock ostentatious--a knock irritating and offensive--impiger and iracundus.

But the step that came up the stairs did not suit the knock; it was a step light, yet firm--slow, yet elastic.

The maid-servant who had opened the door had, no doubt, informed Vivian of my visit, for he did not seem surprised to see me; but he cast that hurried, suspicious look round the room which a man is apt to cast when he has left his papers about and finds some idler, on whose

trustworthiness he by no means depends, seated in the midst of the unguarded secrets. The look was not flattering; but my conscience was so unreproachful that I laid all the blame upon the general suspiciousness of Vivian's character.

"Three hours, at least, have I been here!" said I, maliciously.

"Three hours!"--again the look.

"And this is the worst secret I have discovered,"--and I pointed to those literary Manicheans.

"Oh!" said he, carelessly, "French novels! I don't wonder you stayed so long. I can't read your English novels,--flat and insipid; there are truth and life here."

"Truth and life!" cried I, every hair on my head erect with astonishment. "Then hurrah for falsehood and death!"

"They don't please you,--no accounting for tastes."

"I beg your pardon,--I account for yours, if you really take for truth and life monsters so nefast and flagitious. For Heaven's sake, my dear fellow, don't suppose that any man could get on in England,--get anywhere but to the Old Bailey or Norfolk Island,--if he squared his conduct to such topsy-turvy notions of the world as I find here."

"How many years are you my senior," asked Vivian, sneeringly, "that you should play the mentor and correct my ignorance of the world?"

"Vivian, it is not age and experience that speak here, it is something far wiser than they,--the instinct of a man's heart and a gentleman's honor."

"Well, well," said Vivian, rather discomposed, "let the poor books alone; you know my creed--that books influence us little one way or the other."

"By the great Egyptian library and the soul of Diodorus! I wish you could hear my father upon that point. Come," added I, with sublime compassion, "come, it is not too late, do let me introduce you to my father. I will consent to read French novels all my life if a single chat with Austin Caxton does not send you home with a happier face and lighter heart. Come, let me take you back to dine with us to-day."

"I cannot," said Vivian, with some confusion; "I cannot, for this day I leave London. Some other time perhaps,--for," he added, but not heartily, "we may meet again."

"I hope so," said I, wringing his hand, "and that is likely, since, in spite of yourself, I have guessed your secret,--your birth and parentage."

"How!" cried Vivian, turning pale and gnawing his lip. "What do you mean? Speak."

"Well, then, are you not the lost, runaway son of Colonel Vivian? Come, say the truth; let us be confidants."

Vivian threw off a succession of his abrupt sighs; and, then, seating himself, leaned his face on the table, confused, no doubt, to find himself discovered.

"You are near the mark," said he, at last, "but do not ask me further yet. Some day," he cried impetuously, and springing suddenly to his feet, "some day you shall know all,--yes, some day, if I live, when that name shall be high in the world; yes, when the world is at my feet!" He stretched his right hand as if to grasp the space, and his whole face was lighted with a fierce enthusiasm. The glow died away, and with a slight return of his scornful smile he said: "Dreams yet; dreams! And now, look at this paper." And he drew out a memorandum, scrawled over with figures.

"This, I think, is my pecuniary debt to you; in a few days I shall discharge it. Give me your address."

"Oh!" said I, pained, "can you speak to me of money, Vivian?"

"It is one of those instincts of honor you cite so often," answered he, coloring. "Pardon me."

"That is my address," said I, stooping to write, in order to conceal my wounded feelings. "You will avail yourself of it, I hope, often, and tell me that you are well and happy."

"When I am happy you shall know."

"You do not require any introduction to Trevanion?"

Vivian hesitated. "No, I think not. If ever I do, I will write for it."

I took up my hat, and was about to go,--for I was still chilled and mortified,--when, as if by an irresistible impulse, Vivian came to me hastily, flung his arms round my neck, and kissed me as a boy kisses his brother.

"Bear with me!" he cried in a faltering voice; "I did not think to love any one as you have made me love you, though sadly against the grain. If you are not my good angel, it is that nature and habit are too strong for you. Certainly some day we shall meet again. I shall have time, in the mean while, to see if the world can be indeed 'mine oyster, which I with sword can open.' I would be aut Caesar aut nullus! Very little other Latin know I to quote from! If Caesar, men will forgive me all the means to the end; if nullus, London has a river, and in every street one may buy a cord!"

"Vivian! Vivian!"

"Now go, my dear friend, while my heart is softened,--go before I shock you with some return of the native Adam. Go, go!"

And taking me gently by the arm, Francis Vivian drew me from the room, and re-entering, locked his door.

Ah! if I could have left him Robert Hall, instead of those execrable Typhons! But would that medicine have suited his case, or must grim Experience write sterner prescriptions with iron hand?

## CHAPTER II.

When I got back, just in time for dinner, Roland had not returned, nor did he return till late in the evening. All our eyes were directed towards him, as we rose with one accord to give him welcome; but his face was like a mask,--it was locked and rigid and unreadable.

Shutting the door carefully after him, he came to the hearth, stood on it, upright and calm, for a few moments, and then asked,--

"Has Blanche gone to bed?"

"Yes," said my mother, "but not to sleep, I am sure; she made me promise to tell her when you came back."

Roland's brow relaxed.

"To-morrow, sister," said he, slowly, "will you see that she has the proper mourning made for her? My son is dead."

"Dead!" we cried with one voice, and surrounded him with one impulse.

"Dead! impossible,--you could not say it so calmly. Dead,--how do you know? You may be deceived. Who told you? why do you think so?"

"I have seen his remains," said my uncle, with the same gloomy calm. "We will all mourn for him. Pisistratus, you are heir to my name now, as to your father's. Good-night; excuse me, all--all you dear and kind ones; I am worn out." Roland lighted his candle and went away, leaving us thunderstruck; but he came back again, looked round, took up his book, open in the favorite passage, nodded again, and again vanished. We looked at each other as if we had seen a ghost. Then my father rose and went out of the room, and remained in Roland's till the night was well-nigh gone! We sat up, my mother and I, till he returned. His benign face looked profoundly sad.

"How is it, sir? Can you tell us more?" My father shook his head.

"Roland prays that you may preserve the same forbearance you have shown hitherto, and never mention his son's name to him. Peace be to the living, as to the dead! Kitty, this changes our plans; we must all go to Cumberland,--we cannot leave Roland thus!"

"Poor, poor Roland!" said my mother, through her tears. "And to think that father and son were not reconciled! But Roland forgives him now,--oh, yes, now!"

"It is not Roland we can censure," said my father, almost fiercely; "it is--But enough; we must hurry out of town as soon as we can: Roland will recover in the native air of his old ruins."

We went up to bed mournfully. "And so," thought I, "ends one grand object of my life! I had hoped to have brought those two together. But, alas, what peacemaker like the grave!"



### CHAPTER III.

My uncle did not leave his room for three days; but he was much closeted with a lawyer, and my father dropped some words which seemed to imply

that the deceased had incurred debts, and that the poor Captain was making some charge on his small property. As Roland had said that he had seen the remains of his son, I took it at first for granted that we should attend a funeral; but no word of this was said. On the fourth day Roland, in deep mourning, entered a hackney-coach with the lawyer, and was absent about two hours. I did not doubt that he had thus quietly fulfilled the last mournful offices. On his return, he shut himself up again for the rest of the day, and would not see even my father. But the next morning he made his appearance as usual, and I even thought that he seemed more cheerful than I had yet known him,-- whether he played a part, or whether the worst was now over, and the grave was less cruel than uncertainty. On the following day we all set out for Cumberland.

In the interval, Uncle Jack had been almost constantly at the house, and, to do him justice, he had seemed unaffectedly shocked at the calamity that had befallen Roland. There was, indeed, no want of heart in Uncle Jack, whenever you went straight at it; but it was hard to find if you took a circuitous route towards it through the pockets. The worthy speculator had indeed much business to transact with my father before he left town. The Anti-Publisher Society had been set up, and it was through the obstetric aid of that fraternity that the Great Book was to be ushered into the world. The new journal, the "Literary Times," was also far advanced,--not yet out, but my father was fairly in for it. There were preparations for its debut on a vast scale, and two or three gentlemen in black--one of whom looked like a lawyer, and another like a printer, and a third uncommonly like a Jew--called twice, with papers of a very formidable aspect. All these preliminaries settled, the last thing I heard Uncle Jack say, with a slap on my father's back, was, "Fame and fortune both made now! You may go to sleep in safety, for you leave me wide awake. Jack Tibbets never sleeps!"

I had thought it strange that, since my abrupt exodus from Trevanion's house, no notice had been taken of any of us by himself or Lady Ellinor. But on the very eve of our departure came a kind note from Trevanion to me, dated from his favorite country seat (accompanied by a present of some rare books to my father), in which he said, briefly, that there had been illness in his family which had obliged him to leave town for a change of air, but that Lady Ellinor expected to call on my mother the next week. He had found amongst his books some curious works of the Middle Ages, amongst others a complete set of Cardan, which he knew my father would like to have, and so sent them. There was no allusion to what had passed between us. In reply to this note, after due thanks on my father's part, who seized upon the Cardan (Lyons edition, 1663, ten volumes folio) as a silk-worm does upon a mulberry-leaf, I expressed our joint regrets that there was no hope of our seeing Lady Ellinor, as we were just leaving town. I should have added something on the loss my uncle had sustained, but my father thought that since Roland shrank from any mention of his son, even by his nearest kindred, it would be his

obvious wish not to parade his affliction beyond that circle.

And there had been illness in Trevanion's family! On whom had it fallen? I could not rest satisfied with that general expression, and I took my answer myself to Trevanion's house, instead of sending it by the post. In reply to my inquiries, the porter said that all the family were expected at the end of the week; that he had heard both Lady Ellinor and Miss Trevanion had been rather poorly, but that they were now better. I left my note with orders to forward it; and my wounds bled afresh as I came away.

We had the whole coach to ourselves in our journey, and a silent journey it was, till we arrived at a little town about eight miles from my uncle's residence, to which we could only get through a cross-road. My uncle insisted on preceding us that night; and though he had written before we started, to announce our coming, he was fidgety lest the poor tower should not make the best figure it could, so he went alone, and we took our ease at our inn.

Betimes the next day we hired a fly-coach--for a chaise could never have held us and my father's books--and jogged through a labyrinth of villanous lanes which no Marshal Wade had ever reformed from their primal chaos. But poor Mrs. Primmins and the canary-bird alone seemed sensible of the jolts; the former, who sat opposite to us wedged amidst a medley of packages, all marked "Care, to be kept top uppermost" (why I know not, for they were but books, and whether they lay top or bottom it could not materially affect their value),--the former, I say, contrived to extend her arms over those disjecta membra, and griping a window-sill with the right hand, and a window-sill with the left, kept her seat rampant, like the split eagle of the Austrian Empire: in fact, it would be well nowadays if the split eagle were as firm as Mrs. Primmins! As for the canary, it never failed to respond, by an astonished chirp, to every "Gracious me!" and "Lord save us!" which the delve into a rut, or the bump out of it, sent forth from Mrs. Primmins's lips, with all the emphatic dolor of the "Ai, ai!" in a Greek chorus.

But my father, with his broad hat over his brows, was in deep thought. The scenes of his youth were rising before him, and his memory went, smooth as a spirit's wing, over delve and bump. And my mother, who sat next him, had her arm on his shoulder, and was watching his face jealously. Did she think that in that thoughtful face there was regret for the old love? Blanche, who had been very sad, and had wept much and quietly since they put on her the mourning, and told her that she had no brother (though she had no remembrance of the lost), began now to evince infantine curiosity and eagerness to catch the first peep of her father's beloved tower. And Blanche sat on my knee, and I shared her impatience. At last there came in view a church-spire, a church, a plain square building near it, the parsonage (my father's old home), a long, straggling street of cottages and rude shops, with a better kind of house here and there, and in the hinder ground a gray, deformed mass of wall and ruin, placed on one of those eminences on which the Danes loved to pitch camp or build fort, with one high, rude, Anglo-Norman tower rising from the midst. Few trees were round it, and those either poplars or firs, save, as we approached, one mighty oak,--integral and unscathed. The road now wound behind the parsonage and up a steep ascent. Such a road,--the whole parish ought to have been flogged for it! If I had sent up a road like that, even on a map, to Dr. Herman, I should not have sat down in comfort for a week to come!

The fly-coach came to a full stop.

"Let us get out," cried I, opening the door, and springing to the ground to set the example.

Blanche followed, and my respected parents came next. But when Mrs. Primmins was about to heave herself into movement,

"Papce!" said my father. "I think, Mrs. Primmins, you must remain in, to keep the books steady."

"Lord love you!" cried Mrs. Primmins, aghast.

"The subtraction of such a mass, or moles,--supple and elastic as all flesh is, and fitting into the hard corners of the inert matter,--such a subtraction, Mrs. Primmins, would leave a vacuum which no natural system, certainly no artificial organization, could sustain. There would be a regular dance of atoms, Mrs. Primmins; my books would fly here, there, on the floor, out of the window!

"Corporis officium est quoniam omnia deorsum."

"The business of a body like yours, Mrs. Primmins, is to press all things down, to keep them tight, as you will know one of these days,--that is, if you will do me the favor to read Lucretius, and master that material philosophy of which I may say, without flattery, my dear Mrs. Primmins, that you are a living illustration."

These, the first words my father had spoken since we set out from the inn, seemed to assure my mother that she need have no apprehension as to the character of his thoughts, for her brow cleared, and she said, laughing,--

"Only look at poor Primmins, and then at that hill!"

"You may subtract Primmins, if you will be answerable for the remnant, Kitty. Only I warn you that it is against all the laws of physics."

So saying, he sprang lightly forward, and, taking hold of my arm, paused and looked round, and drew the loud free breath with which we draw native air.

"And yet," said my father, after that grateful and affectionate inspiration,--"and yet, it must be owned that a more ugly country one cannot see out of Cambridgeshire." (1)

"Nay," said I, "it is bold and large, it has a beauty of its own. Those immense, undulating, uncultivated, treeless tracts have surely their charm of wildness and solitude. And how they suit the character of the ruin! All is feudal there! I understand Roland better now."

"I hope to Heaven Cardan will come to no harm!" cried my father; "he is very handsomely bound, and he fitted beautifully just into the fleshiest part of that fidgety Primmins."

Blanche, meanwhile, had run far before us, and I followed fast. There were still the remains of that deep trench (surrounding the ruins on three sides, leaving a ragged hill-top at the fourth) which made the favorite fortification of all the Teutonic tribes. A causeway, raised

on brick arches, now, however, supplied the place of the drawbridge, and the outer gate was but a mass of picturesque ruin. Entering into the courtyard or bailey, the old castle mound, from which justice had been dispensed, was in full view, rising higher than the broken walls around it, and partially over grown with brambles. And there stood, comparatively whole, the Tower or Keep, and from its portals emerged the veteran owner.

His ancestors might have received us in more state, but certainly they could not have given us a warmer greeting. In fact, in his own domain Roland appeared another man. His stiffness, which was a little repulsive to those who did not understand it, was all gone. He seemed less proud, precisely because he and his pride, on that ground, were on good terms with each other. How gallantly he extended,--not his arm, in our modern Jack-and-Jill sort of fashion, but his right hand to my mother; how carefully he led her over "brake, bush, and scaur," through the low vaulted door, where a tall servant, who, it was easy to see, had been a soldier,--in the precise livery, no doubt, warranted by the heraldic colors (his stockings were red!),--stood upright as a sentry. And coming into the hall, it looked absolutely cheerful,--it took us by surprise. There was a great fireplace, and, though it was still summer, a great fire! It did not seem a bit too much, for the walls were stone, the lofty roof open to the rafters, while the windows were small and narrow, and so high and so deep sunk that one seemed in a vault. Nevertheless, I say the room looked sociable and cheerful,--thanks principally to the fire, and partly to a very ingenious medley of old tapestry at one end, and matting at the other, fastened to the lower part of the walls, seconded by an arrangement of furniture which did credit to my uncle's taste for the picturesque. After we had looked about and admired to our heart's content, Roland took us, not up one of those noble staircases you see in the later manorial residences, but a little winding stone stair, into the rooms he had appropriated to his guests. There was first a small chamber, which he called my father's study,--in truth, it would have done for any philosopher or saint who wished to shut out the world, and might have passed for the interior of such a column as the Stylites inhabited; for you must have climbed a ladder to have looked out of the window, and then the vision of no short-sighted man could have got over the interval in the wall made by the narrow casement, which, after all, gave no other prospect than a Cumberland sky, with an occasional rook in it. But my father, I think I have said before, did not much care for scenery, and he looked round with great satisfaction upon the retreat assigned him.

"We can knock up shelves for your books in no time," said my uncle, rubbing his hands.

"It would be a charity," quoth my father, "for they have been very long in a recumbent position, and would like to stretch themselves, poor things. My dear Roland, this room is made for books,--so round and so deep! I shall sit here, like Truth in a well."

"And there is a room for you, sister, just out of it," said my uncle, opening a little, low, prison-like door into a charming room, for its window was low and it had an iron balcony; "and out of that is the bedroom. For you, Pisistratus, my boy, I am afraid that it is soldier's quarters, indeed, with which you will have to put up. But never mind; in a day or two we shall make all worthy a general of your illustrious name,--for he was a great general, Pisistratus the First, was he not, brother?"

"All tyrants are," said my father; "the knack of soldiering is indispensable to them."

"Oh! you may say what you please here," said Roland, in high good humor, as he drew me downstairs, still apologizing for my quarters, and so earnestly that I made up my mind that I was to be put into an oubliette. Nor were my suspicions much dispelled on seeing that we had to leave the keep, and pick our way into what seemed to me a mere heap of rubbish on the dexter side of the court. But I was agreeably surprised to find, amidst these wrecks, a room with a noble casement, commanding the whole country, and placed immediately over a plot of ground cultivated as a garden. The furniture was ample, though homely; the floors and walls well matted; and, altogether, despite the inconvenience of having to cross the courtyard to get to the rest of the house, and being wholly without the modern luxury of a bell, I thought that I could not be better lodged.

"But this is a perfect bower, my dear uncle! Depend on it, it was the bower-chamber of the Dames de Caxton,--Heaven rest them!"

"No," said my uncle, gravely, "I suspect it must have been the chaplain's room, for the chapel was to the right of you. An earlier chapel, indeed, formerly existed in the keep tower; for, indeed, it is scarcely a true keep without a chapel, well, and hall. I can show you part of the roof of the first, and the two last are entire; the well is very curious, formed in the substance of the wall at one angle of the hall. In Charles the First's time our ancestor lowered his only son down in a bucket, and kept him there six hours, while a malignant mob was storming the tower. I need not say that our ancestor himself scorned to hide from such a rabble, for he was a grown man. The boy lived to be a sad spendthrift, and used the well for cooling his wine. He drank up a great many good acres."

"I should scratch him out of the pedigree, if I were you. But pray, have you not discovered the proper chamber of that great Sir William about whom my father is so shamefully sceptical?"

"To tell you a secret," answered the Captain, giving me a sly poke in the ribs, "I have put your father into it! There are the initial letters W. C. let into the cusp of the York rose, and the date, three years before the battle of Bosworth, over the chimney-piece."

I could not help joining my uncle's grim, low laugh at this characteristic pleasantry; and after I had complimented him on so judicious a mode of proving his point, I asked him how he could possibly have contrived to fit up the ruin so well, especially as he had scarcely visited it since his purchase.

"Why," said he, "some years ago that poor fellow you now see as my servant, and who is gardener, bailiff, seneschal, butler, and anything else you can put him to, was sent out of the army on the invalid list. So I placed him here; and as he is a capital carpenter, and has had a very fair education, I told him what I wanted, and put by a small sum every year for repairs and furnishing. It is astonishing how little it cost me; for Bolt, poor fellow (that is his name), caught the right spirit of the thing, and most of the furniture (which you see is ancient and suitable) he picked up at different cottages and farm-houses in the neighborhood. As it is, however, we have plenty more rooms here and

there,--only, of late," continued my uncle, slightly changing color, "I had no money to spare. But come," he resumed with an evident effort, "come and see my barrack; it is on the other side of the hall, and made out of what no doubt were the butteries."

We reached the yard, and found the fly-coach had just crawled to the door. My father's head was buried deep in the vehicle; he was gathering up his packages and sending out, oracle-like, various muttered objurgations and anathemas upon Mrs. Primmins and her vacuum, which Mrs. Primmins, standing by and making a lap with her apron to receive the packages and anathemas simultaneously, bore with the mildness of an angel, lifting up her eyes to heaven and murmuring something about "poor old bones,"--though as for Mrs. Primmins's bones, they had been myths these twenty years, and you might as soon have found a Plesiosaurus in the fat lands of Romney Marsh as a bone amidst those layers of flesh in which my poor father thought he had so carefully cottoned up his Cardan.

Leaving these parties to adjust matters between them, we stepped under the low doorway and entered Roland's room. Oh! certainly Bolt had caught the spirit of the thing; certainly he had penetrated down to the pathos that lay within the deeps of Roland's character. Buffon says, "The style is the man;" there, the room was the man. That nameless, inexpressible, soldier--like, methodical neatness which belonged to Roland,--that was the first thing that struck one; that was the general character of the whole. Then, in details, there, on stout oak shelves, were the books on which my father loved to jest his more imaginative brother; there they were,--*Froissart*, *Barante*, *Joinville*, the *Mort d'Arthur*, *Amadis of Gaul*, *Spenser's Faerie Queene*, a noble copy of *Strutt's Horda*, *Mallet's Northern Antiquities*, *Percy's Reliques*, *Pope's Homer*, books on gunnery, archery, fortification; old chivalry and modern war together, cheek-by-jowl.

Old chivalry and modern war! Look to that tilting helmet with the tall Caxton crest, and look to that trophy near it,--a French cuirass--and that old banner (a knight's pennon) surmounting those crossed bayonets. And over the chimney-piece there--bright, clean, and, I warrant you, dusted daily--are Roland's own sword, his holsters and pistols, yea, the saddle, pierced and lacerated, from which he had reeled when that leg-- I gasped, I felt it all at a glance, and I stole softly to the spot, and, had Roland not been there, I could have kissed that sword as reverently as if it had been a Bayard's or a Sidney's.

My uncle was too modest to guess my emotion; he rather thought I had turned my face to conceal a smile at his vanity, and said, in a deprecating tone of apology: "It was all Bolt's doing, foolish fellow!"

(1) This certainly cannot be said of Cumberland generally, one of the most beautiful counties in Great Britain. But the immediate district to which Mr. Caxton's exclamation refers, if not ugly, is at least savage, bare, and rude.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Our host regaled us with a hospitality that notably contrasted his economical thrifty habits in London. To be sure, Bolt had caught the

great pike which headed the feast; and Bolt, no doubt, had helped to rear those fine chickens ab ovo; Bolt, I have no doubt, made that excellent Spanish omelette; and, for the rest, the products of the sheepwalk and the garden came in as volunteer auxiliaries,--very different from the mercenary recruits by which those metropolitan Condottieri, the butcher and greengrocer, hasten the ruin of that melancholy commonwealth called "genteel poverty."

Our evening passed cheerfully; and Roland, contrary to his custom, was talker in chief. It was eleven o'clock before Bolt appeared with a lantern to conduct me through the courtyard to my dormitory among the ruins,--a ceremony which, every night, shine or dark, he insisted upon punctiliously performing.

It was long before I could sleep; before I could believe that but so few days had elapsed since Roland heard of his son's death,--that son whose fate had so long tortured him; and yet, never had Roland appeared so free from sorrow! Was it natural, was it effort? Several days passed before I could answer that question, and then not wholly to my satisfaction. Effort there was, or rather resolute, systematic determination. At moments Roland's head drooped, his brows met, and the whole man seemed to sink. Yet these were only moments; he would rouse himself up, like a dozing charger at the sound of the trumpet, and shake off the creeping weight. But whether from the vigor of his determination, or from some aid in other trains of reflection, I could not but perceive that Roland's sadness really was less grave and bitter than it had been, or than it was natural to suppose. He seemed to transfer, daily, more and more, his affections from the dead to those around him, especially to Blanche and myself. He let it be seen that he looked on me now as his lawful successor,--as the future supporter of his name; he was fond of confiding to me all his little plans, and consulting me on them. He would walk with me around his domains (of which I shall say more hereafter),--point out, from every eminence we climbed, where the broad lands which his forefathers had owned stretched away to the horizon: unfold with tender hand the mouldering pedigree, and rest lingeringly on those of his ancestors who had held martial post or had died on the field. There was a crusader who had followed Richard to Ascalon; there was a knight who had fought at Agincourt: there was a cavalier (whose picture was still extant), with fair love-locks, who had fallen at Worcester,--no doubt the same who had cooled his son in that well which the son devoted to more agreeable associations. But of all these worthies there was none whom my uncle, perhaps from the spirit of contradiction, valued like that apocryphal Sir William. And why? Because when the apostate Stanley turned the fortunes of the field at Bosworth, and when that cry of despair, "Treason! treason!" burst from the lips of the last Plantagenet, "amongst the faithless," this true soldier, "faithful found," had fallen in that lion rush which Richard made at his foe. "Your father tells me that Richard was a murderer and usurper," quoth my uncle. "Sir, that might be true or not; but it was not on the field of battle that his followers were to reason on the character of the master who trusted them, especially when a legion of foreign hirelings stood opposed to them. I would not have descended from that turncoat Stanley to be lord of all the lands the earls of Derby can boast of. Sir, in loyalty, men fight and die for a grand principle and a lofty passion; and this brave Sir William was paying back to the last Plantagenet the benefits he had received from the first!"

"And yet it may be doubted," said I, maliciously, "whether William

Caxton the printer did not--"

Plague, pestilence, and fire seize William Caxton the printer, and his invention too!" cried my uncle, barbarously.

"When there were only a few books, at least they were good ones; and now they are so plentiful, all they do is to confound the judgment, unsettle the reason, drive the good books out of cultivation, and draw a ploughshare of innovation over every ancient landmark; seduce the women, womanize the men, upset states, thrones, and churches; rear a race of chattering, conceited coxcombs who can always find books in plenty to excuse them from doing their duty; make the poor discontented, the rich crotchety and whimsical, refine away the stout old virtues into quibbles and sentiments! All imagination formerly was expended in noble action, adventure, enterprise, high deeds, and aspirations; now a man can but be imaginative by feeding on the false excitement of passions he never felt, dangers he never shared, and he fritters away all there is of life to spare in him upon the fictitious love--sorrows of Bond Street and St. James's. Sir, chivalry ceased when the Press rose! And to fasten upon me, as a forefather, out of all men who ever lived and sinned, the very man who has most destroyed what I most valued,--who, by the Lord! with his cursed invention has well-nigh got rid of respect for forefathers altogether,--is a cruelty of which my brother had never been capable if that printer's devil had not got hold of him!"

That a man in this blessed nineteenth century should be such a Vandal, and that my Uncle Roland should talk in a strain that Totila would have been ashamed of, within so short a time after my father's scientific and erudite oration on the Hygeiana of Books,--was enough to make one despair of the progress of intellect and the perfectibility of our species. And I have no manner of doubt that, all the while, my uncle had a brace of books in his pockets, Robert Hall one of them! In truth, he had talked himself into a passion, and did not know what nonsense he was saying. But this explosion of Captain Roland's has shattered the thread of my matter. Puff! I must take breath and begin again.

Yes, in spite of my sauciness, the old soldier evidently took to me more and more. And besides our critical examination of the property and the pedigree, he carried me with him on long excursions to distant villages where some memorial of a defunct Caxton, a coat of arms, or an epitaph on a tombstone, might be still seen. And he made me pore over topographical works and county histories (forgetful, Goth that he was, that for those very authorities he was indebted to the repudiated printer!) to find some anecdote of his beloved dead! In truth, the county for miles round bore the vestigia of those old Caxtons; their handwriting was on many a broken wall. And obscure as they all were, compared to that great operative of the Sanctuary at Westminster whom my father clung to, still, that the yesterdays that had lighted them the way to dusty death had cast no glare on dishonored scutcheons seemed clear, from the popular respect and traditional affection in which I found that the name was still held in hamlet and homestead. It was pleasant to see the veneration with which this small hidalgo of some three hundred a-year was held, and the patriarchal affection with which he returned it. Roland was a man who would walk into a cottage, rest his cork leg on the hearth, and talk for the hour together upon all that lay nearest to the hearts of the owners. There is a peculiar spirit of aristocracy amongst agricultural peasants: they like old names and families; they identify themselves with the honors of a house, as if of its clan. They do not care so much for wealth as townsfolk and the



middle class do; they have a pity, but a respectful one, for well-born poverty. And then this Roland, too,--who would go and dine in a cookshop, and receive change for a shilling, and shun the ruinous luxury of a hack cabriolet,--could be positively extravagant in his liberalities to those around him. He was altogether another being in his paternal acres. The shabby-genteel, half-pay captain, lost in the whirl of London, here luxuriated into a dignified ease of manner that Chesterfield might have admired. And if to please is the true sign of politeness, I wish you could have seen the faces that smiled upon Captain Roland as he walked down the village, nodding from side to side.

One day a frank, hearty old woman, who had known Roland as a boy, seeing him lean on my arm, stopped us, as she said bluffly, to take a "geud luiik" at me.

Fortunately I was stalwart enough to pass muster, even in the eyes of a Cumberland matron; and after a compliment at which Roland seemed much pleased, she said to me, but pointing to the Captain,--

"Hegh, sir, now you ha' the bra' time before you, you maun e'en try and be as geud as he. And if life last, ye wull too; for there never waur a bad ane of that stock. Wi' heads kindly stup'd to the least, and lifted manfu' oop to the heighest,--that ye all war' sin ye came from the Ark. Blessin's on the ould name! though little pelf goes with it, it sounds on the peur man's ear like a bit of gould!"

"Do you not see now," said Roland, as we turned away, "what we owe to a name, and what to our forefathers? Do you not see why the remotest ancestor has a right to our respect and consideration,--for he was a parent? 'Honor your parents': the law does not say, 'Honor your children!' If a child disgrace us, and the dead, and the sanctity of this great heritage of their virtues,--the name; if he does--" Roland stopped short, and added fervently, "But you are my heir now,--I have no fear! What matter one foolish old man's sorrows? The name, that property of generations, is saved, thank Heaven,--the name!"

Now the riddle was solved, and I understood why, amidst all his natural grief for a son's loss, that proud father was consoled. For he was less himself a father than a son,--son to the long dead. From every grave where a progenitor slept, he had heard a parent's voice. He could bear to be bereaved, if the forefathers were not dishonored. Roland was more than half a Roman; the son might still cling to his household affections, but the Lares were a part of his religion.

## CHAPTER V.

But I ought to be hard at work preparing myself for Cambridge. The deuce! how can I? The point in academical education on which I require most preparation is Greek composition. I come to my father, who, one might think, was at home enough in this. But rare indeed it is to find a great scholar who is a good teacher.

My dear father, if one is content to take you in your own way, there never was a more admirable instructor for the heart, the head, the

principles, or the taste,--when you have discovered that there is some one sore to be healed, one defect to be repaired; and you have rubbed your spectacles, and got your hand fairly into that recess between your frill and your waistcoat. But to go to you cut and dry, monotonously, regularly, book and exercise in hand; to see the mournful patience with which you tear yourself from that great volume of Cardan in the very honeymoon of possession; and then to note those mild eyebrows gradually distend themselves into perplexed diagonals over some false quantity or some barbarous collocation, till there steal forth that horrible Papce! which means more on your lips than I am sure it ever did when Latin was a live language, and Papce a natural and unpedantic ejaculation!--no, I would sooner blunder through the dark by myself a thousand times than light my rushlight at the lamp of that Phlegethonian Papce!

And then my father would wisely and kindly, but wondrous slowly, erase three fourths of one's pet verses, and intercalate others that one saw were exquisite, but could not exactly see why. And then one asked why; and my father shook his head in despair, and said, "But you ought to feel why!"

In short, scholarship to him was like poetry; he could no more teach it you than Pindar could have taught you how to make an ode. You breathed the aroma, but you could no more seize and analyze it than, with the opening of your naked hand, you could carry off the scent of a rose. I soon left my father in peace to Cardan and to the Great Book,--which last, by the way, advanced but slowly; for Uncle Jack had now insisted on its being published in quarto, with illustrative plates, and those plates took an immense time, and were to cost an immense sum,--but that cost was the affair of the Anti-Publisher Society. But how can I settle to work by myself? No sooner have I got into my room--penitus ab orbe divisus, as I rashly think--than there is a tap at the door. Now it is my mother, who is benevolently engaged upon making curtains to all the windows (a trifling superfluity that Bolt had forgotten or disdained), and who wants to know how the draperies are fashioned at Mr. Trevanion's,--a pretence to have me near her, and see with her own eyes that I am not fretting; the moment she hears I have shut myself up in my room, she is sure that it is for sorrow. Now it is Bolt, who is making bookshelves for my father, and desires to consult me at every turn, especially as I have given him a Gothic design, which pleases him hugely. Now it is Blanche, whom, in an evil hour, I undertook to teach to draw, and who comes in on tiptoe, vowing she'll not disturb me, and sits so quiet that she fidgets me out of all patience. Now, and much more often, it is the Captain, who wants me to walk, to ride, to fish. And, by St. Hubert (saint of the chase) bright August comes, and there is moorgame on those barren wolds; and my uncle has given me the gun he shot with at my age,--single-barrelled, flint lock; but you would not have laughed at it if you had seen the strange feats it did in Roland's hands,--while in mine, I could always lay the blame on the flint lock! Time, in short, passed rapidly; and if Roland and I had our dark hours, we chased them away before they could settle,--shot them on the wing as they got up.

Then, too, though the immediate scenery around my uncle's was so bleak and desolate, the country within a few miles was so full of objects of interest,--of landscapes so poetically grand or lovely; and occasionally we coaxed my father from the Cardan, and spent whole days by the margin of some glorious lake.

Amongst these excursions I made one by myself to that house in which my

father had known the bliss and the pangs of that stern first-love which still left its scars fresh on my own memory. The house, large and imposing, was shut up,--the Trevanions had not been there for years,--the pleasure-grounds had been contracted into the smallest possible space. There was no positive decay or ruin,--that Trevanion would never have allowed; but there was the dreary look of absenteeism everywhere. I penetrated into the house with the help of my card and half-a-crown. I saw that memorable boudoir,--I could fancy the very spot in which my father had heard the sentence that had changed the current of his life. And when I returned home, I looked with new tenderness on my father's placid brow, and blessed anew that tender helpmate who in her patient love had chased from it every shadow.

I had received one letter from Vivian a few days after our arrival. It had been re-directed from my father's house, at which I had given him my address. It was short, but seemed cheerful. He said that he believed he had at last hit on the right way, and should keep to it; that he and the world were better friends than they had been; that the only way to keep friends with the world was to treat it as a tamed tiger, and have one hand on a crowbar while one fondled the beast with the other. He enclosed me a bank-note, which somewhat more than covered his debt to me, and bade me pay him the surplus when he should claim it as a millionaire. He gave me no address in his letter, but it bore the postmark of Godalming. I had the impertinent curiosity to look into an old topographical work upon Surrey, and in a supplemental itinerary I found this passage: "To the left of the beech wood, three miles from Godalming, you catch a glimpse of the elegant seat of Francis Vivian,

Esq." To judge by the date of the work, the said Francis Vivian might be the grandfather of my friend, his namesake. There could no longer be any doubt as to the parentage of this prodigal son.

The long vacation was now nearly over, and all his guests were to leave the poor Captain. In fact, we had made a considerable trespass on his hospitality. It was settled that I was to accompany my father and mother to their long-neglected Penates, and start thence for Cambridge.

Our parting was sorrowful,--even Mrs. Primmins wept as she shook hands with Bolt. But Bolt, an old soldier, was of course a lady's man. The brothers did not shake hands only,--they fondly embraced, as brothers of that time of life rarely do nowadays, except on the stage. And Blanche, with one arm round my mother's neck and one round mine, sobbed in my ear: "But I will be your little wife, I will." Finally, the fly-coach once more received us all,--all but poor Blanche, and we looked round and missed her.

## CHAPTER VI.

Alma Mater! Alma Mater! New-fashioned folks, with their large theories of education, may find fault with thee. But a true Spartan mother thou art: hard and stern as the old matron who bricked up her son Pausanias, bringing the first stone to immure him,--hard and stern, I say, to the worthless, but full of majestic tenderness to the worthy.

For a young man to go up to Cambridge (I say nothing of Oxford, knowing

nothing thereof) merely as routine work, to lounge through three years to a degree among the (Greek word),--for such an one Oxford Street herself, whom the immortal Opium-Eater hath so direly apostrophized, is not a more careless and stony-hearted mother. But for him who will read, who will work, who will seize the rare advantages proffered, who will select his friends judiciously,--yea, out of that vast ferment of young idea in its lusty vigor choose the good and reject the bad,--there is plenty to make those three years rich with fruit imperishable, three years nobly spent, even though one must pass over the Ass's Bridge to get into the Temple of Honor.

Important changes in the Academical system have been recently announced, and honors are henceforth to be accorded to the successful disciples in moral and natural sciences. By the side of the old throne of Mathesis they have placed two very useful fauteuils a la Voltaire. I have no objection; but in those three years of life it is not so much the thing learned as the steady perseverance in learning something that is excellent.

It was fortunate, in one respect, for me that I had seen a little of the real world,--the metropolitan,--before I came to that mimic one,--the cloistral. For what were called pleasures in the last, and which might have allured me, had I come fresh from school, had no charm for me now. Hard drinking and high play, a certain mixture of coarseness and extravagance, made the fashion among the idle when I was at the University, console Planco,--when Wordsworth was master of Trinity; it may be altered now.

But I had already outlived such temptations, and so, naturally, I was thrown out of the society of the idle, and somewhat into that of the laborious.

Still, to speak frankly, I had no longer the old pleasure in books. If my acquaintance with the great world had destroyed the temptation to puerile excesses, it had also increased my constitutional tendency to practical action. And, alas! in spite of all the benefit I had derived from Robert Hall, there were times when memory was so poignant that I had no choice but to rush from the lonely room haunted by tempting phantoms too dangerously fair, and sober Town the fever of the heart by some violent bodily fatigue. The ardor which belongs to early youth, and which it best dedicates to knowledge, had been charmed prematurely to shrines less severely sacred. Therefore, though I labored, it was with that full sense of labor which (as I found at a much later period of life) the truly triumphant student never knows. Learning--that marble image--warms into life, not at the toil of the chisel, but the worship of the sculptor. The mechanical workman finds but the voiceless stone.

At my uncle's, such a thing as a newspaper rarely made its appearance. At Cambridge, even among reading men, the newspapers had their due importance. Politics ran high; and I had not been three days at Cambridge before I heard Trevanion's name. Newspapers, therefore, had their charms for me. Trevanion's prophecy about himself seemed about to be fulfilled. There were rumors of changes in the Cabinet. Trevanion's name was bandied to and fro, struck from praise to blame, high and low, as a shuttlecock. Still the changes were not made, and the Cabinet held firm. Not a word in the "Morning Post," under the head of "fashionable intelligence," as to rumors that would have agitated me more than the rise and fall of governments; no hint of "the speedy nuptials of the

daughter and sole heiress of a distinguished and wealthy commoner:" only now and then, in enumerating the circle of brilliant guests at the house of some party chief, I gulped back the heart that rushed to my lips when I saw the names of Lady Ellinor and Miss Trevanion.

But amongst all that prolific progeny of the periodical Press, remote offspring of my great namesake and ancestor (for I hold the faith of my father), where was the "Literary Times"? What had so long retarded its promised blossoms? Not a leaf in the shape of advertisements had yet emerged from its mother earth. I hoped from my heart that the whole thing was abandoned, and would not mention it in my letters home, lest I should revive the mere idea of it. But in default of the "Literary Times" there did appear a new journal, a daily journal too,--a tall, slender, and meagre stripling, with a vast head, by way of prospectus, which protruded itself for three weeks successively at the top of the leading article, with a fine and subtle body of paragraphs, and the smallest legs, in the way of advertisements, that any poor newspaper ever stood upon! And yet this attenuated journal had a plump and plethoric title,--a title that smacked of turtle and venison; an aldermanic, portly, grandiose, Falstaffian title: it was called *The Capitalist*. And all those fine, subtle paragraphs were larded out with recipes how to make money. There was an *El Dorado* in every sentence. To believe that paper, you would think no man had ever yet found a proper return for his pounds, shillings, and pence; you would turn up your nose at twenty per cent. There was a great deal about Ireland,--not her wrongs, thank Heaven! but her fisheries; a long inquiry what had become of the pearls for which Britain was once so famous; a learned disquisition upon certain lost gold mines now happily re-discovered; a very ingenious proposition to turn London smoke into manure, by a new chemical process; recommendations to the poor to hatch chickens in ovens like the ancient Egyptians; agricultural schemes for sowing the waste lands in England with onions, upon the system adopted near Bedford,--net produce one hundred pounds an acre. In short, according to that paper, every rood of ground might well maintain its man, and every shilling be, like Hobson's money-bag, "the fruitful parent of a hundred more." For three days, at the newspaper room of the Union Club, men talked of this journal: some pished, some sneered, some wondered; till an ill-natured mathematician, who had just taken his degree, and had spare time on his hands, sent a long letter to the "*Morning Chronicle*," showing up more blunders, in some article to which the editor of "*The Capitalist*" had specially invited attention, than would have paved the whole island of *Laputa*. After that time, not a soul read "*The Capitalist*." How long it dragged on its existence I know not; but it certainly did not die of a *maladie de langueur*.

Little thought I, when I joined in the laugh against "*The Capitalist*," that I ought rather to have followed it to its grave, in black crape and weepers,--unfeeling wretch that I was! But, like a poet, O "*Capitalist*"! thou Overt not discovered and appreciated and prized and mourned till thou Overt dead and buried, and the bill came in for thy monument.

The first term of my college life was just expiring when I received a letter from my mother, so agitated, so alarming,--at first reading so unintelligible,--that I could only see that some great misfortune had befallen us; and I stopped short and dropped on my knees to pray for the life and health of those whom that misfortune more specially seemed to menace; and then, towards the end of the last blurred sentence, read twice, thrice, over,--I could cry, "Thank Heaven, thank Heaven! it is

only, then, money after all!"

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