

dangerous circumstances to be moved. Very heavy bail was taken for him, and an officer besides left in the house. A most rigorous investigation into the whole affair was set on foot by Mr. Parkhurst and Dr. Ebury. The claims of the absent Fowler were thoroughly sifted, and found to be irrefragable. Morning, noon and night, did Mr. Parkhurst devote cheerfully to the laborious inquiry: writing with his own hands hundreds of folios. When at length, he had collected all his materials, and as the phrase is, "licked them a little into shape," he set off with them for London, to secure the opinion and advice of the celebrated Attorney General. Great interest was excited about the cause, even in the metropolis; and all parties waited with anxiety for the decision of the Attorney General, as if his fiat had been that of the judges.

The day appointed by the Attorney General for delivering his opinion on the voluminous case laid before him, happened singularly enough, to be that on which the new baronet and his friends arrived in London, from America. Mr. Parkhurst soon received intelligence of the event, and procured the attendance of Sir William, with himself; Dr. Ebury, and another, at the Attorney General's chambers in the Temple where he had intimated his intention of reading to them and explaining his opinion.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I do not think I ever devoted such anxious care to a case, as to this. I have gone nearly a dozen times over this pile of papers, and had all the while, the assistance of my eminent brother, the Solicitor General. We completely agree in one opinion; which is, that the title of *Sir William Gwynne* CANNOT BE DISTURBED." Mr. Parkhurst almost sunk into the floor. "There are two reasons for this," proceeded the Attorney General, calmly; "first, the statutes of limitations came into operation six months ago, in *Sir William's* favor; and I need not say, that when the statute once begins to run, nothing can stop it. But even supposing that ground to be doubtful, as it may, possibly, be beat into a questionable shape, there is yet a fatal obstacle in the way of William Fowler, the person whose pretensions you have so zealously and ably espoused; *Sir William Gwynne* IS THE RIGHT HEIR AT LAW." Mr. Parkhurst looked aghast. "In a matter of such moment as this, I have availed myself of a certain information, which was tendered to me in consideration of my office. I have here and shall deliver into your hands, a document, formerly in the possession of the deceased Mr. Job Oxleigh, and unquestionably in his hand writing, stating with proofs, that the wife of the late *William Fowler Gwynne*, the alleged mother of the person now present," pointing to the *soi-disant* baronet, "died, certainly having given birth to a son; but that son DIED

within a week of his christening. This young man, who has always hitherto borne the name of William Fowler, was an orphan son of a poor woman that died in the neighborhood of Mrs. Fowler, who took her child, nursed it, gave it the name of William Fowler, and died leaving it about two years of age. The whole has been the singularly artful contrivance of the late Mr. Job Oxleigh, to hold *Sir William Gwynne* in bondage, and extort from him the estate called 'The Sheaves,' of which Mr. Oxleigh was possessed. I may take the liberty of suggesting, that though the baronet has acted cruelly and illegally, under the circumstances, a prosecution against him would be more than barely sustained. He has suffered greater torture for the last nine or ten years, than the law can inflict upon him. It is of course, however, for you and others to consider this, which I merely offer as a suggestion. Sir, I beg to hand you my written opinion, as well as the document to which I have alluded; and to intimate that I am compelled to withdraw, being summoned to attend the king.

The Attorney General bowed, and withdrew into another room, leaving Mr. Parkhurst, and indeed all present, completely thunderstruck.

"What! be I no baronet, then, after all?" inquired Fowler, wofully chop-fallen. Mr. Parkhurst gave him no answer.

"Who is to send me back again to America?"

These were puzzling and unwelcome questions. How the poor fellow was eventually disposed of, I know not; though it is said, he was seen, shortly after, in his old character of a waggoner; and his splendid adventures silenced forever the claims to popularity of Dick Forster. Mr. Parkhurst did not continue in town two hours after the Attorney General had delivered his opinion; but stepped into a post-chaise and four, and hurried down into Shropshire, to release *Sir William Gwynne* from all restraint, and communicate the extraordinary turn which circumstances had taken. He reached Gwynne Hall in time to see the return of the mournful funeral procession, which had attended *Sir William's* remains to the vault of his ancestors. The grief-worn, broken-hearted baronet; the victim of villany almost unequalled in systematic atrocity, had expired about a week before, begging he might be buried as quickly as possible; as though he were ashamed for his remains to be upon the face of the earth. The titles and estates went to a remote member of the family. Q. Q. Q.

He who thinks no man above him but for his virtue, none below him but for his vice, can never be obsequious of assuming in a wrong place; will frequently emulate men in rank below him, and pity those above him.