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He thought it necessary to improve the occasion with a very solemn lecture about the start of my career, and gave me heaps of good advice, mentioned the moderate allowance he could make me—small enough for me to remember without any difficulty—and then came to the pith of what was in his thoughts.

"I think it necessary to tell you, now, Ferdinand, a rather painful chapter of our family history. You know most good families have these things ; and as it concerns some relatives of ours in Madrid, and as you can act for me out there, it's altogether fortunate you are going."

"Relatives in Madrid, sir !" I exclaimed, in considerable astonishment.

"I said Madrid, Ferdinand ; and really you cannot learn too soon that concealment of surprise—and indeed of any kind of feeling—is one of the essentials for diplomatic success." He said this in his most didactic manner, and I assumed a properly stolid expression, resolved to make no further sign of surprise let the story be what it might.

"You needn't look like a block of wood," was his next comment ; and I guessed that he was in doubt how to put the matter, and therefore vented the irritation on me. "The fact is," he continued, after a pause, "that you had another uncle beside the late peer ; junior to both Charles and myself. He lived a very wild, adventurous life—that's where you get your love of wandering—and he had a very stormy time in Spain. He's been dead many years now, poor fellow, and the circumstances are all strange and, I suppose I must say, romantic." He said this regretfully, as though romance had a taint of vulgarity unworthy of the peerage.