

sacrificed your interest in Havana, they retain theirs in Virginia. Why not?"

"So I have taken to tobacco again, and I confess I like it."

"And the total abstinence, plan—how does that work?" asked Desdemona.

"I have had to give it up. What is the use of letting the people know that you have given up wine when they cleave to their beer?"

"Exactly," said Desdemona, who could never be taught to sympathise with the grand experiment. "You gave up your allegiance to the grape of Bordeaux, and you fancied they would give up theirs to the barley of the Spotted Lion. Poor enthusiast."

"Well, I have taken to my claret again, now. And, of course, it is absurd to pretend any longer to live within my wages."

"You have been brought up," said Desdemona the sceptic, "to live as all English gentlemen do; that is, well. You tried suddenly, and without preparation, to live as no English gentleman does! that is, on a minimum. What could you expect but a breakdown?"

"Yes," he said, sadly. "It is a breakdown, so far."

"As your daily diet is different from theirs," the woman of experience went on, "so are your thoughts different from their thoughts. Your brain is quickened by education, by generous diet, by freedom from care; theirs are dulled by no education, by low living, and by constant money anxieties. You have travelled and read; they know nothing but what they see. My poor Alan, what sort of minds do you propose to understand with all this trouble?"

"There is a sense in all men," said Alan, "which lies dormant in some, but must be a lingering spark that wants the breath of sympathy to kindle it into flame. It is the spur of all noble actions. I want to light that flame in all their hearts."

"In your rank," said the actress, "they call it ambition, and it is laudable; in theirs, it is discontent, and it is a crime. Would you fly straight in the face of your Church Catechism?"

As the days went on, the physical weariness grew less, Alan became stronger; the pains went out of his legs and arms; he could stoop over a field and go weeding for hours without suffering; he acquired, as we have said, an enormous appetite, and,

probably because he lived better than the rest of the men, he found himself after a time able to sit up in the evening, work, write, and devise things for the good of the village.

First, he began to look into the doings of the Parliament, which had now held a weekly Saturday evening sitting for some six weeks. He discovered on inquiry, that his orders about providing a good supper, with abundance of beer, had been literally and liberally carried out, but that, as no minutes of proceedings were kept, it was impossible for him to discover what, if anything, had been discoursed. What really happened, as he soon found out, was, that the men, after eating the supper and drinking the beer, adjourned without any further debate to the Spotted Lion.

This discovery struck Alan with consternation. He took blame to himself for the carelessness with which he had left the Parliament to its own duties. He ought, he remembered, to have attended at every meeting, to have presided, suggested topics of discussion, and led. But he had always been so tired. One thing, however, was clear. It was not enough to point the way. The rustics required a leader. That he ought to have known all along.

Accordingly on the next Saturday evening, the members of the House of Commons received an intimation by means of a fly-leaf, that supper would no longer be provided, as it appeared to be a hindrance to deliberation.

"You may," Alan wrote, "when you divide your profits from the farm, vote whatever proportion you please to be spent in a weekly supper. Indeed, some such sort of common festal meal, to which the women and children could be admitted, seems most desirable and helpful. But I cannot longer encourage a feast which I designed as a preliminary to serious talk, and which seems to have been converted into a drinking-bout."

"What does the Squire mean by this here, William?" asked the oldest inhabitant.

But William could not explain this unexpected move. It was beyond him. A weekly supper which had lasted for six weeks seemed destined to last forever. When the men recovered sufficiently to discuss the matter, it was considered as an act of meanness beyond any precedent.

On the following Saturday, Alan came to the Parliament, bringing with him a bundle