

Algy was a pleb, a rank radical, but he kept a first class table in his modest chambers, which bore more evidences of good easy bachelor existence than of hard study. Besides, he was only a theoretical socialist; one of those who abhor omnibusses because the company is so mixed, and whom one meets a few years afterwards as respectable ornaments of the Bench, and great sticklers for the recognition of their knighthood.

However, even had Smithers been so minded, Lord Brazen could just then have afforded to hear his order blackguarded over a good bottle of wine.

II.

AFTER LONG YEARS. A CHAPTER WHICH ENDS IN THE ORTHODOX FASHION.

Six years have elapsed since we parted with Lord Brazen in the Inner Temple, London. Our scene has changed from the busy streets of the metropolis to a pretty little village on the south coast of England. We are now on the great Fosky-Bosky estate.

A bronzed stranger—(we expected this)—stands in the hall of the Fosky-Bosky manor. He stands with his back to the entrance, with his hat in one hand and the other thrust into his trousers pocket. His eyes glance familiarly and rapidly over the appointments of the hall. Suddenly he makes a dive into his breast pocket and pulls out a printed document, which looks like an auctioneer's inventory. Then he looks for some once familiar object. It has gone.

"How changed," he sighs. "Tempora mutantur!" He refers, hesitatingly, to a footnote in pencil on the document, and proceeds: "O Tempus edax—rerum!" Then, after a pause, he misses something else from its accustomed place, and murmurs: "Goths! it had a sentimental value of, at least, a hundred dollars. Vandals! I'm a cool hundred out of pocket."

The stranger's last remark betrayed the fact that either he had been travelling in America, or was one of those New York aristocrats who possess ancestral seats in England in order that they may shoot and ride to hounds occasionally when Wall street's flat.

An old man, in a brilliant scarlet plush waistcoat, is seated half buried in an old-fashioned hooded armchair, studded with brass headed nails—one of those venerable relics of a past generation, which seem to link the present with the past. The first earl of Fosky-Bosky had picked it up cheap at a second-hand furniture store in Wardour street, and generations of other people's servants had sleepily awaited their master's return until the small hours of the morning in its deep recess. This, therefore, also had a sentimental interest for the stranger.

The old man is peacefully slumbering, unconscious of the stranger's entrance. It being in the middle of summer, the hall door stood wide open, to admit whatever air might be stirring. The stranger regards him fixedly. His hair is powdered; his buttons are of white metal; his shoe buckles are of the same material and painfully conspicuous. He wears knee breeches and silk stockings, but his shrunken calves do not harmonize well with the antique aspect of the chair. There is something, however, which arrests attention about this old man's calves. Although they are not beautiful, they are distinctly aristocratic; yet he is but the major-domo—a pampered menial.

The stranger seems somewhat agitated. The old man's features are familiar to him, but he cannot exactly remember under what circumstances he has seen them before. He is not the Roger Banbury Cross, neither is the livery that of the ancient Fosky-Bosky family.

At last he decides to awaken the old fellow and makes a sudden dive into the depths of the armchair and drags him out into the middle of the hall.

"The Earl of Fosky-Bosky!" he exclaims, when the light falls upon the features of the amazed servant.

"In private life, sir, the same," replies the menial. "In my official capacity, John, sir, John."

"Good heavens! How came you in this position?"

"By making an application for it, sir. I had undeniable references, and——"

"But what circumstances led to your determination to enter upon your present occupation?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I cannot bear to be flurried. My nerves won't stand it. The story is a very long one, and very sad, and the recital of it is extremely painful to me. I dislike above all things to be recognized by strangers; it recalls memories that I had wished buried in oblivion for ever. Yes, it's a very long story," he repeated, with a deep drawn sigh, more to himself than to his interlocutor, "very long—very sad."

"I do not ask, my friend, from any motives of morbid vulgar curiosity. I am exceedingly, painfully, interested in your history, and would consider myself under an everlasting obligation to you if——"

The old man nodded as he carefully placed a couple of bright gold pieces in his waistcoat pocket—a deposit on the "everlasting obligation"—and clearing his throat, began:

"Well, I'll be as brief as possible. There was a heavy mortgage on my property—this estate, you know. Things came to a crisis. My hard-hearted, villainous creditors foreclosed, and I was left in my old age penniless. I could do nothing else, so I determined to go with the fixtures at thirty shillings a week, livery and all found. In the days of my prosperity I knew very well that my butler managed to make a decent income out of his position, with the perquisites and articles which got lost sight of, and I thought that I could perform the duties satisfactorily. I applied and was employed. Of course, it's very bitter, but, bless you, I'm comfortable. My duties are light, and the family are very considerate to me. I could wish the livery was of a more retiring shade, but then Dame Fortune has been not unkind to me. My last days will be spent in peace, untroubled by duns and the cares of the world. I desire nothing more."

"Had you not a son?" enquired the stranger, with trembling lips.

"Oh, yes. A good-for-nothing, wilful, ungrateful scaramouch! I have not heard of him for years, and have not the least idea where he is now. He may be at Jericho for all I care!"

"And has it come to this?" cries the stranger, catching John to his heart, and weeping as if that organ were in danger of breaking with overpressure.

"Don't, sir!" replies John, gently removing the stranger's head from his waistcoat. "Don't give way, sir,—don't weep; it spoils the plush."

"Father, father!" Don't you recognize me?"

"Goodness, gracious! It's the prodigal returned—and we've nothing but hash for dinner! Can it be possible that you are my Lord Brazen, my long lost, much beloved, son?" The old man then threw his arms passionately about the prodigal's neck, and gave full vent to his feelings. After a reasonable exhibition of joy on both sides, the old gentleman enquired what his son had been doing during the long years of their separation.

"Listen," replied Lord Brazen, striking an attitude appropriate to a theatrical *denouement*. "I left a land, which was full of nothing but bitter memories and duns for me, and emigrated to America. Algy, my old friend, advanced the money requisite for my passage—I shudder to think of the interest which has accumulated, and is likely to accumulate, upon that debt. The second day after my arrival the president of a large banking concern, knowing that I was a principal in this story, waited upon me and implored me, upon his bended knees, to accept a position as secretary-treasurer. Had I saved his life on the passage over? No. The author omitted to introduce that incident until too late, and it got edited out of the story. The editor intimated that the exigencies of space, etc. Well, it was a sore trial—a bitter humiliation; but with a noble heroism I immolated myself upon the altar of mammon for the benefit of my family—that's you and myself. For six weary years I helped that corporation and myself to the best of my ability. One

morning, however, the secretary-treasurer awoke with an intense yearning to revisit his native land. His vivid imagination pictured the rural delights and retirements of its lovely green lanes and the city became in comparison hideous and oppressive. Certain 'posters,' stating a bank manager 'was wanted,' offended his eyes on moral and artistic grounds. A place that required such a large staff of police to maintain law and order was manifestly unsafe. He grew so morbidly nervous and home sick, in the course of the day, that he did not show up at the bank, but took a passage for Liverpool in the mail boat that sailed at noon, and—here he is!"

"Capital, Percy, my boy; you are a genius. Oh, if I had only been born with a talent for finance! But there, regret is useless; that way, madness lies. I suppose the American papers by this time have published full and appreciative accounts of your wonderful administrative abilities?"

"Certainly. I've dropped my title in consequence. True greatness shuns the maddening crowd."

"Oh, that's only a trifle. We must journey to some foreign clime and try new ones. How would you like to be a count, Percy?"

"Not much. Counts are at a discount."

"What a witty, mercenary cuss you are, Percy. Still a count counts for something at some places—Monte Carlo, for instance."

The earl, as we may still call him to the end of the story, touched a bell cord, and a fellow servant, in plush, obeyed the summons.

"William," he cried, his face glowing with honest enthusiasm, "this is the finale! Bring forth the fatted calf—no, no! I mean the blushing bride expectant. Tell her its time to 'ring down.'"

Mary Elizabeth was on the scene in the twinkling of an eye. A moment previously she had been engaged in depriving Spanish onions of their outer garments, preparatory to mixing them with other ingredients for a dish of Irish stew—it was a washing day. Naturally, therefore, she wept copiously. It was all so sudden, so unexpected.

Lord Brazen rushed forward and received her half fainting form in his arms. He then imprinted a chaste salute upon her alabaster brow, the reverberation of which was the signal for the two gentlemen in plush to retire precipitately to the regions below.

We feel confident that the reader, like ourselves, is not a whit less delicate than the plushes, so we will drop the curtain upon this joyful reunion.

* * * * *

N.B.—We had almost forgotten to mention a matter of paramount importance in a romance of this character.

Of course, Mary was discovered to have been a duchess masquerading as a kitchen maid, in order to see if she could win some true man's heart, without the aid of the superficial attractions of rank and fortune.

[Different readers will judge of this story in different ways. Some will storm against it as coarse, with no redeeming character; others will simply wonder what the author meant, if he meant anything; and still others will fail to see what moral is to be enforced by it. The editor, who was the first to proclaim and make public the clever young writer, when he put forth a short sketch, some time last winter, accepted this contribution from him as a pretty successful burlesque on the class of harrowing short stories, quite popular in England, supposed to be written by persons of "the quality" and meant to ridicule their own caste.—Editor DOMINION ILLUSTRATED.]

GOING THE ROUNDS.—Greatness is paid homage to by some people in peculiar ways. Everybody must remember the story told in connection with Victor Hugo. The great poet was startled one morning by the intrusion of three Englishmen. "Victor Hugo," said one consulting a memorandum book. The poet bowed, thinking that he should be asked for his autograph next. After the visitors had stared for a few seconds the memorandum book was again consulted. "Eleven o'clock; the lions!" said the spokesman. Then the party bowed and walked out of the room.—*Chambers' Journal*.