

care of the poor, if it is proverbial that sleep and preaching go together."

Alan laughed. This was one of the few points in which he could agree with his father. Nothing pleases the advanced thinker—say, a thinker of the higher order—than a sneer at the clergy. It is pleasant, I suppose, to feel one's self so much superior to the constituted spiritual teachers of the people.

"Lectures are of no use," Alan went on, "by themselves. We must not only direct and teach, but we must lead. My next attempt will be to lead."

"Ye—yes," said his father; "that sounds well as a general principle. To descend to particulars, now."

"My project is hardly ripe just yet," Alan replied; "when it is in working order, I will ask you to come down and see it for yourself. Will that do?"

"Perfectly, perfectly, Alan. Nothing is more wearisome than a discussion of probabilities. If I find your plan a failure, I can enjoy the luxury, since I know nothing about it beforehand, of swearing that I always knew it to be impracticable. Do not deprive me of that luxury."

Alan laughed.

"I am going down to the Court this afternoon," he said; "I shall talk over my schemes with Miranda, and take her advice."

"Miranda!" his father's face lit up, as it always did at the thought of a pretty woman. "Miranda! She was pretty when you went away; she is lovely now, and full of fancies. I love a woman to have whims, always looking out, you know, for the new gospel. It is delightful to find such a girl. She was up in London last season; turned the heads of half the young fellows, and all the old ones; refused a dozen offers, including Professor Spectrum, who thought she came to his lectures out of love for him, whereas she came, you see, because she thought physics and chemistry a part of the modern culture. Then she went back to her place in the country; and I believe she is there still. I will go down, as soon as these confounded east winds disappear, and make love to her myself. I will, Alan, upon my word, I will."

Alan looked as if he hardly approved of this frivolous way of discussing Miranda, and presently went away, whereupon Lord Alwyne sat down and wrote a letter.

"MY DEAR MIRANDA,

"It is two o'clock in the afternoon. I have written all my letters, had breakfast with Alan, smoked three cigarettes, and read all the papers; what remains, but to write a letter, all about nothing, to the loveliest girl I know? N.B.—This is not old-fashioned politeness, Regency manners, but the natural right of a man who has kissed you every year, at least once, since you were a baby in arms. You will have seen Alan before you get this letter. Tell me what you think of him. For my own part, I find him greatly improved. He has lost that melancholy which naturally springs from having had such very superior persons for his friends. He is livelier; he has more feeling for the frivolities of an old man like myself. He is, in a word, much less of a prig than he was. Imagine the joy of a father who hates prigs. I am not without hopes that he may yet come to the point of being able to laugh at a good story.

"Of course, he has a head full of projects, and he will carry them straight to you. I was afraid, at one point of the breakfast, that he was going to confide them to me; but he refrained, for which I am grateful. I forgot to tell you that he accepted the comfort of my chambers and the little light follies of my conversation without that mute reproachful gaze, which used to make me wonder whether he really was my son, or whether he had been changed at nurse, and belonged, perhaps, to the converted carpenter. As, however, his ideas, filtered through your brain, will assume a far more attractive form, I confess I should like you to write me word what they amount to; and, as I may be allowed to take some interest in his proceedings, I shall ask you to throw all the weight of your good sense in the scale. If he should propose to part with the property for any philanthropic schemes, I think I would go the length of locking him up in a private lunatic asylum, where they will tickle the soles of his feet with a feather.

"Writing to you about Alan makes me think of a conversation we had, you and I, that afternoon last year, when you gave up a whole day to delight an elderly lover of yours with your society. You remember the talk, perhaps. We were floating down the river under the Clieveden woods, you and I, in a boat together. I told you what were my greatest hopes. You blushed very prettily,