

tender with a tolerant air of perfect contentment with all mankind and the constitution of the universe.

'I shall walk,' Paul murmured again, not dogmatically, but as one who wishes to settle a question off-hand.

'Look here, now, Gascoyne, as the Highland meenister said in his prayer, this is clean rideeklous. Do you mean to say you're too grand to ride a donkey? You think it *infra dig.* for a B. of B. K.—there, will that suit you?—to be seen on a beast which is quite good enough—'

Paul cut him short once more with a gesture of impatience.

'It's unkind of you, Thistleton,' he said, 'to go on lairp-ing so often on that threadbare string, when you see how very much pain and annoyance it causes me. You know it's not that. Heaven knows I'm not proud—not that way, at least—what on earth have I got not to be ashamed of? No, the simple truth is, if you must have it, I don't want to go to the expense of a donkey.'

'My dear fellow! Why, it's only five francs for the whole day, they tell me.'

Paul Gascoyne smiled. 'But five francs is a consideration to me,' he answered, after a slight mental reckoning. 'Fifty pence, you see; that's four and twopence. Four and twopence is an awful lot of money to fling away for nothing!' And he rearranged the logs on the fire reflectively.

'Well, look here, Gascoyne: sooner than mar the harmony of the meeting, I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll stand you a donkey.'

Paul gave a little start of surprise and uneasiness. His colour deepened. 'Oh no,' he said. 'Thistleton, I couldn't allow that. If I go at all, I shall go on my own legs, or else take a beast and pay my own expenses.'

'Who's proud now?' the blonde young man exclaimed, with provoking good-humour.

Paul looked down at him gravely from the corner of the mantelpiece on which his arm rested.

'Thistleton,' he said, in a serious voice, growing redder still in the face as he spoke, 'to tell you the truth, I'm ashamed already of how much I'm letting you do for me. When I first arranged to come abroad with you, and have my expenses paid, I hadn't the remotest conception, I assure you, of what an awful sum the expenses would come to.'