

"A Methodist minister! Do they read Greek?" exclaimed Evans in a tone of surprise. "I thought they were a set of illiterate nomads, prowling around the country."

"Many of them do," said Lawrence, with quiet dignity, "and some of them read Hebrew also. My father taught himself."

"It's many a year since I read any. Let's see if I have forgotten it all," said Evans.

"Where did you learn it?" asked Lawrence, handing him the Testament.

"Where they know how to teach it, my boy, at Oxford. I don't look like it, I suppose, but I once studied at old Brasenose. One of my class-mates became a bishop and sits in his lawn in the House of Lords, and another of them is a lord of the Admiralty and lives in Belgravia. Curse him! when I asked him to give me a berth in the dockyard he had the impertinence to tell me that his duty to his country wouldn't allow him, and he turned me off with a guinea, the beggarly fellow, he did."

Lawrence said nothing, but he thought that very probably the Admiralty lord had good reasons for his conduct, and that he had been very generous as well.

"The more fool I. I've nobody to blame but myself for being here," went on the remorseful man. "But drink and dice and bad company would drag a bishop down to a beast—to say nothing of a reckless wretch like me. I have a brother who owns as fine an estate as any in Dorset. Oh! he's a highly respectable man"—this was uttered with a bitter ironical emphasis—"only drinks the very best port and sherry while I had to put up with London gin or vile whisky. I couldn't abide his everlasting homilies, so I took ship to Quebec and shook off the dust of my feet against them."

"Do your friends know you are in this country," asked Lawrence, not seeing the relevancy of the quotation with which this speech closed.

"No, indeed, and I'll take good care that they shan't. They think I am dead. Best so; and I am dead to them. No one would recognise in the seedy Matt Evans the fashionable man-about-town who used to lounge in the windows of the Pall Mall Club."