

were dark with hard work and antiquity; the chair seats polished with innumerable frictions. A creeping old waiter, who seemed to have known better days in a higher-class establishment, came to receive the new-comer's orders; and Robert sat down to wait for his modest chop and glass of ale.

That morning's *Times* lay on his table: he glanced over the broad sheet of advertisements—that wondrous daily record of need and of endeavour among the toiling millions of London. The inexplicable solitude in a crowd came about the reader's heart: what a poor chance had a provincial stranger amid the jostling multitude all eager for the prizes of comfort and competence! Robert went back for anchor to one strong fact. The Honourable Mr. Currie Faver, Secretary to the Board of Patronage, had declared to the member for the Irish county of C——, on the eve of an important division, that his young friend should have the earliest appointment at his disposal in a certain department. Robert Wynn felt an inward gratulation on the superiority of his auspices. True, the promise made in January yet remained due in July; but there were numberless excellent good reasons why Mr. Currie Faver had been as yet unable to redeem his pledge.

Robert turned his paper to look for the news: a paragraph in the corner arrested his attention.

'We learn from the best authority that, owing to the diminution of business consequent upon recent Acts of the Legislature, it is the intention of Her Majesty's Commissioners of Public Locomotion to reduce their staffs of officials, so that no fresh appointments can be made for some months.'