

the camel's-hair thread bound upon their brows; sately Moslems, turbaned and slippers; Greeks, in crimson jackets and dingy white kilts; dervishes, in high felt caps; magnificent dragomen, in huge muslin trousers; Armenians, Copts, Syrians, negroes, Jews of all climates, and travellers from every quarter of the globe. The water-carrier, with his jar of sherbet on his head, tinkles his brass drinking-cups in the ears of the passers-by; the tart-seller offers his melon-puffs; and here, just leaving the fruit-shop, where she has doubtless been buying "Syrian apples and Othmanee quinces, peaches of Oman, and Egyptian limes," comes the fair Amine herself, followed by that identical porter who was "a man of sense, and had perused histories."

Wandering on thus in a dream of Arabian Nights, the young men, having fortified themselves with sherbet, presently mount a couple of very thorough-bred, high-spirited donkeys, and set off for the ruins of ancient Alexandria. These ruins lie out beyond the town walls, amid a sandy, dreary, hillocky waste that stretches far away for miles and miles beside the sparkling sea. Here they see Pompey's pillar, and Cleopatra's obelisk, and a wilderness of crumbling masonry clothed in a green and golden mantle of wild marigolds all in flower. Here, where once stood the temple of Serapis with its platform of a hundred steps, the wild sea-bird flits unmolested, the jackals have their lair, and the travellers talk of the glories of the Ptolemys.

At last, fairly tired out, our Franks are fain to strike their colours and go back to the town. Here they put up at an English hotel, where they bathe, dine, and rest till evening; when they again sally forth—this time to call upon the English consul.

#### CHAPTER LXIX. IN SEARCH OF A COMPANY.

The consul was not at his office when the travellers presented themselves; but his representative, a very magnificent young clerk, resplendent in rings, chains, and a fez, was there instead. They found this official in the act of writing a letter, humming a tune, and smoking a cigar—all of which occupations he continued to pursue with unabated ardour, notwithstanding that Saxon presented himself before his desk.

"I shall be glad to speak to you, if you please," said Saxon, "when you are at leisure."

"No passport business transacted after two o'clock in the day," replied the clerk, without lifting his eyes.

"Mins is not passport business," replied Saxon. The clerk hummed another bar, and went on writing.

Saxon began to lose patience.

"I wish to make a simple inquiry," said he; "and I will thank you to lay your pen aside for a moment, while I do so."

The peremptory tone produced its effect. The clerk paused, looked up, lifted his eyebrows with an air of nonchalant insolence, and said:

"Why the dooce, then, don't you ask it?"

"I wish to know in what part of this city I shall find the offices of the New Overland Route Railway and Steam-Packet Company."

"What do you mean by the *New Overland Route*?" said the clerk.

"I mean a company so-called—a company which has lately established an office here in Alexandria."

"Never heard of any such company," said the clerk, "nor of any such office."

"Where, then, do you suppose I can obtain this information?"

"Well, I should say—nowhere."

"I think it is my turn to ask what you mean?" said Saxon, haughtily.

"My meaning is simple enough," replied the clerk, taking up his pen. "There is no *New Overland Company* in Alexandria."

"But I know that there is a company of that name," exclaimed Saxon.

The clerk shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, very well," said he. "If you know it, that's enough."

And with this he resumed his triple occupation.

At that moment a little glass door opened at

the back of the office, and a bald-headed gentleman came out. He bowed.

"You are inquiring," he said, "for some commercial office, I believe? If you will permit me to offer a suggestion, I would advise your calling upon Mr. Melchisedek. Mr. Melchisedek is our great commercial authority in Alexandria. He knows everything, and he knows everybody. A man of universal information, and very courteous to strangers. You cannot do better than call on Mr. Melchisedek."

"I am sure," said Saxon, "I am very much obliged to you."

"Not at all—not in the least. Mr. Melchisedek—any one will direct you. The viceroy is not better known. Good evening."

So saying, the bald-headed gentleman bowed the travellers to the door, and closed it behind them.

"Why, Trefalden," said the Earl, when they were once more in the street, "what interest can you possibly take in an Overland Company? It is some obscure undertaking, depend on it."

"It won't be obscure for long," replied Saxon, complacently. "It is a magnificent affair; and if the agents out here are keeping it quiet, they have their own reasons for doing so."

"You seem to know all about it," said Castle-towers, with some surprise.

"I know a good deal about it."

"And mean to take shares?"

"I have taken shares already," replied Saxon, "to a large amount."

Whereupon the Earl only looked grave, and said nothing.

#### CHAPTER LXX. MR. GREATOREX IN SEARCH OF AN INVESTMENT.

While Saxon and his friend were yachting and fighting, and London was yet full of overflowing, and Francesco Secondo was still, to all appearance, firmly seated on his throne, Mr. Laurence Greatorex bent his steps one brilliant July morning in the direction of Chancery-lane, and paid a visit to William Trefalden.

He had experienced some little difficulty in making up his mind to this step; for it was an exceedingly disagreeable one, and required no small amount of effort in its accomplishment. He had seen and avoided the lawyer often enough during the last two or three months; but he had never spoken to him since that affair of the stopped cheque. His intention had been never to exchange civil speech or salutation with William Trefalden again; but to hate him heartily, and manifest his hatred openly, all the days of his life. And he would have done this uncompromisingly, if his regard for Saxon had not come in the way. But he liked that young fellow with a genuine liking (just as he hated the lawyer with a genuine hatred), and, cost what it might, he was determined to serve him. So, having thought over their last conversation—that conversation which took place in the train, between Portsmouth and London; having looked in vain for the registration of any company which seemed likely to be the one referred to; having examined no end of reports, prospectuses, lists of directors, and the like, he resolved, despite his animosity and his reluctance, to see William Trefalden face to face, and try what could be learned in an interview.

Perhaps, even in the very suspicion which prompted him to look after Saxon's interests, despite Saxon's own unwillingness to have them looked after, there may have been a lurking hope, a half-formed anticipation of something like vengeance. If William Trefalden was not acting quite fairly on Saxon Trefalden's behalf, if there should prove to be knavery or laxity in some particular of these unknown transactions, would it not be quite as sweet to expose the defrauder as to assist the defrauded?

Laurence Greatorex did not plainly tell himself that he was actuated by a double motive in what he was about to do. Men of his stamp are not given to analysing their own thoughts and feelings. Keen sighted enough to detect the hidden motives of others, they prefer to make the best of themselves, and habitually look at their own acts from the most favourable point of view. So the banker, having made up his mind to

accept the disagreeable side of his present undertaking, complacently ignored that which might possibly turn out to be quite the reverse, and persuaded himself, as he walked up Fleet-street, that he was doing something almost heroic in the cause of friendship.

He sent in his card, and was shown at once to William Trefalden's private room.

"Good morning, Mr. Trefalden," said he, with that noisy affectation of ease that Sir Charles Burgoyne so especially disliked; "you are surprised to see me here, I don't doubt."

But William Trefalden, who would have manifested no surprise had Laurence Greatorex walked into his room in lawn sleeves and a mitre, only bowed, pointed to a seat, and replied:

"Not at all. I am happy to see you, Mr. Greatorex."

"Thanks." And the banker sat down, and placed his hat on the table. "Any news from Norway?"

"From my cousin Saxon! No. At present not any."

"Really?"

"I do not expect him to write to me."

"Not at all?"

"Why, no—or, at all events, not more than once during his absence. We have exchanged no promises on the score of correspondence; and I am no friend to letter-writing, unless on business."

"You are quite right, Mr. Trefalden. Mere letter-writing is well enough for school-girls and sweethearts; but it is a delusion and a snare to those who have real work on their hands. One only needs to look at a shelf of Horace Walpole's Correspondence to know that the man was an idler and a trifler all his life."

Mr. Trefalden smiled a polite assent.

"But I am not here this morning to discourse on the evils of pen and ink," said Greatorex. "I have come, Mr. Trefalden, to ask your advice."

"You shall be welcome to the best that my experience can offer," replied the lawyer.

"Much obliged. Before going any further, however, I must take you a little way into my confidence."

Mr. Trefalden bowed.

"You must know that I have a little private property. Not much—only a few thousands; but, little as it is, it is my own; and is not invested in the business."

Mr. Trefalden was all attention.

"It is not invested in the business," repeated the banker; "and I do not choose that it should be. I want to keep it apart—snug—safe—handy—wholly and solely at my own disposal. You understand?"

Mr. Trefalden, with a furtive smile, replied that he understood perfectly.

"Nor is this all. I have expensive tastes, expensive habits, expensive friends, and therefore I want all I can get for my money. Till lately I have been lending it at—well, no matter at how much per cent; but now it's just been thrown upon my hands again, and I am looking out for a fresh investment."

Mr. Trefalden, leaning back in his chair, was, in truth, not a little perplexed by the frankness with which Laurence Greatorex was placing these facts before him. However, he listened and smiled, kept his wonder to himself, and waited for what should come next.

"After this preface," added Greatorex, "I suppose I need scarcely tell you the object of my visit."

"I have not yet divined it," replied the lawyer.

"I want to know if you can help me to an investment."

Mr. Trefalden made no secret of the surprise with which he heard this request.

"I help you to an investment?" he repeated.

"My dear sir, you amaze me. In matters of that kind, you must surely be far better able to help yourself than I am to help you."

"Upon my soul, now, I don't see that, Mr. Trefalden."

"Nay, the very nature of your own business—"

"This is a matter which I am anxious to keep apart from our business—altogether apart," interrupted Mr. Greatorex.