

there's only rank and riches in your way, and these sometimes take wings. Keep a good heart, and goodbye!"

Only rank and riches: yes, old man, but these things sometimes sunder hearts and make this world a hell.

CHAPTER XV.

THE old cloister-bred scholastics seldom knew much of the world by actual experience, but we have high authority for regarding many of them as having been the "keenest and most subtle-witted of men," albeit the greatest among them has left at least a part of his name to stamp the character of every blockhead in our schools and colleges. In a critical age like the present one there may be some who will refuse any merit to that great discovery of the schoolmen, namely, that man in a state of nature is with difficulty able to maintain his rights. It is, however, easy enough to be wise after the event,—since the time of Columbus the world has known how to set up an egg on end without breaking the shell. I pray you, gentle reader, to consider that out of this discovery of the schoolmen was born the corollary expounded by Spinoza in his treatise on Politics,—the thesis that, since man individually would be powerless against all, it is incumbent on him to combine with other men so that by mutual assistance they may vindicate and assert their common rights, "sustain their life and cultivate their mind." Whether or not the next generation will in turn discover that combination carried to excess will stifle individual liberty, and that freedom can be throttled by its own safeguards, let us leave time to settle,—sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

Here, O reader benevolent!—for conscience whispers that thou art in very sooth benevolent and kindly disposed to have accompanied the story-teller thus far,—it was my fixed intention to write various profound paragraphs on the great social revolution that has almost transformed this civilization of ours, right under our very noses, within and during the last twenty years. On the one hand, like a

devil's advocate, I proposed to marshal the arguments of those,—mostly well-to-do folks these,—who occupy the ramparts and stand in the casemates of economic necessity as in a strong citadel; on the other, I thought to plead the cause of the "thousand slaves to Mammon's gains," to urge the claims of

"Yon pale Mechanic bending o'er his loom."

Such, I repeat, was my design, a purpose interdicted by the consideration that its fulfilment would have assuredly consigned this narrative to the dark waters of that ocean where thousands of rejected manuscripts, the Flying Dutchmen of literature, drift, spectral ships laden with blighted hopes, with barnacled sides and mildewed rigging. From such a doom, O ye deities by whom the verdicts of publishers are controlled, protect us! and that it may haply be averted let us, gentle reader, return to our story without further delay.

Acting on the aforesaid maxim of combination, Jack Escott, one evening in May, found himself seated among other delegates on the platform of St. James' Hall. A great, and in some respects a portentous, strike had been declared in the East End, and this meeting had been called to enlist public sympathy and to organize a relief fund for the strikers and their families. It was what is called an overflow meeting, that is to say, the hall, capacious as it was and is, could not accommodate all the sympathizers, numbers of whom had, under the conduct of hastily improvised marshals, betaken themselves to Trafalgar Square. Moreover, it was emphatically an enthusiastic meeting, prompt to offer the grateful incense of applause at the telling periods of every speech. At the lower end of the hall, however, there were a few, a very few, less