

be spelt with a very large "P," for whose delectation we are spending this delightful morning in arduous labour—always like to know about the first beginnings of things. They like their popular heroes to start life penniless, tracing their victorious career from such trifles as the picking up of a pin; if such a beginning be not obtainable a welcome change is afforded by the darling of their fancy being born to luxury and wealth, and relinquishing the same either through a fair damsel's smile or through the conscientious promptings of a species of intricate Socialism. The latter is rather in vogue at present. Any scandal of a highly sensational nature will be received with avidity. I hope I make myself clear; what is required is a story which will appeal equally to the family who spend half their Sundays in church moralizing on their neighbours' shortcomings, and to the gin-besotted offsprings of degeneration who find their greatest intellectual pleasure in poring over the details of the latest divorce suit. Extremes meet, my lord, and we find that the same story appeals to these widely divergent classes."

"I quite understand," said the Marquis, this time hunching both his legs unto the chair with him, Pasha fashion; "you wish my story to appeal to the ultra religious and to the ultra degraded, both of whose sensibilities are to be moved by the same lever. Very good. I was born of rich and dishonest parents, but it was always strongly impressed upon me that my birth was an accident, and that though I was the means of bringing my father and mother together in the bonds of matrimony, I was never a persona grata with either of them, the union being singularly unhappy. My father was a burglar, I might say a distinguish-burglar, and my mother was a lady's maid who had proved herself useful to him on many occasions; in fact I may say that the only time that she forfeited his esteem was in the accident of my own birth. I must give my parents credit, however, for having made the best of a bad job as far as I am concerned. I was well educated, being sent under an alias both to an English public school and University. It was after I

had been sent down from the latter that I had my epoch-making interview with my father, whom up to that time I had regarded as a typical example of the nouveau riche, knowing nothing of his unfortunate trade. Calling me into his study he informed me that he was a burglar and that as he felt that he was getting too old to continue his avocation with success and without danger he was contemplating an early retirement after arranging a separation from my mother. I well remember his last words: 'It's up to you now, Randolph; we've given you a good education, a good name, (I was called Randolph Augustus Edward Cecil), and you look a gentleman. I have here for you £5,000 which is all that remains from the sum I put aside for your use when you were first born. You'll have to get out now and look after yourself.'"

To say that the Marquis' words up to the present had filled me with astonishment, to state that I had only managed to keep my balance by holding tightly on to the mantel-piece, even to aver that I had replenished my glass during the above revelation is to convey but the faintest conception of the feeling which I was undergoing. Could this be the Marquis de Cavalcanti talking? Was this really the utterance of the exquisite, whose manners, charms, wealth and nobility had taken New York by storm? Or were these only the vapourings of a titled butterfly who sought new amusement in the tantalizing a Press spider. Such were the thoughts that had flashed through my brain while I was standing in his elegant apartment, replete with all that wealth and taste could suggest. It was as if in a dream that I heard his voice continuing, voicing as it were my own cogitations.

"To say that I was astonished is to put but a mild construction on my feelings," he continued. "I had always considered that my father had worked his way to his position from the place of the proverbial office-boy, and I had therefore never felt any surprise at the numerous unconscious vulgarisms of which he was so often guilty. To use one of your American expressions, I had always excused his outbreaks by remembering that